

The  
HOLLAND  
WOLVES



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Mrs Edward W. Mills 172

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# The Holland Wolves









“ ‘ Take them both alive ’ ”

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# The Holland Wolves

By

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"Garcilaso," and "The Dread and Fear of Kings"

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Troy and Margaret Kinney*



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THIS STORY IS DEDICATED  
TO THE HONOR OF A DAY OF LONG AGO  
WHOSE SUNSHINE LINGERS STILL  
IN HEARTS EVER YOUNG

**My Parents' Wedding Day**



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# The Holland Wolves

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## *BOOK I. THE GATHERING STORM*

### *Chapter One*

#### *THE COMING OF THE SPANIARDS*

A THRONG of people lined the Brussels road which stretched eastward from the gates of Tirlemont. It was a noon hour in the last days of August. Nature, in all her rich, lusty voices, was calling to man to open his heart to pleasure, promising to supply the most delicious perfumes and the most melodious choruses in her stores. But man stood sullen and unmoved, with heart of stone and eyes that gazed hopelessly toward the gates of Tirlemont. There were many women among the watchers, but voices spoke in muffled tones, causing a subdued hum, like the sound of bees crooning themselves to sleep in their hive. When a child burst into laughter, — the natural flower of such an innocent and tender bud, — its mother would draw it to her side and hush it with a whisper.

A young man, who for some time had been seen slowly drawing near from across the meadows that



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sloped away toward Germany, now reached a group standing upon the northern side of the Brussels road. The young man was a foreigner, which entitled him to the suspicion and aversion of the Netherlanders; but he was also a man in distress, for he limped upon a stout staff. He was barefooted, and his clothes hung about him in rags revealing a naked shoulder as white and smooth as marble. He was a blond; and, despite his abject poverty, his fair skin and yellow locks shone with scrupulous cleanliness. One foot was bandaged. The other, soiled only by the passing dust of the morning's journey, was as delicate and shapely as its owner's hands. The features of his upturned face partook both of this beauty and of this refinement. He walked with his head tilted up, as if his thoughts belonged to realms of floating sunshine, not to the rough earth which enviously dragged at his crippled foot. He stopped before a group detached from the other watchers. It stood about an empty cart, to which a splendid horse, slender and black as jet, was harnessed. A man past middle life stood holding the bit. A young man and a maiden, obviously his son and daughter, were beside him.

The stranger lifted his hat, and making a low obeisance to the daughter, said, "God give thee a fair morning."

The girl blushed, and almost smiled.

"I see," spoke up a shaggy man, whose age was concealed by a wild and unkempt beard, "that He has given thee a crippled foot, an it please thee!"

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"It pleases me full as well as thy impertinence," said the stranger. "My foot is but bruised, and will be well in a week. I cannot promise so much for thy head, an I play upon it."

The great uncouth creature threw back the head in question, and gave vent to a derisive guffaw which startled the crowd. It was echoed by a man who stood beside him,—a man equally wild and barbarous in aspect. The people having discovered who had broken the solemn tension of the hour with the sound of mirth, faced about, some in stolid silence, some with a shrug, while a few muttered: "The Holland Wolves!"

"Fair maiden," said the stranger, turning again to the daughter of the man who held the horse, "do these animals snarl at every man who addresses thee?"

"They are my friends," said the girl gently.

"Ah, damsel, I will let my hair grow long and run riot over my face, and clothe me in a jerkin of inexplicable mystery, if thou wilt promise to call me 'Friend' in so sweet a voice!"

"In truth, Sir Stranger," she answered, with a bright gleam in her eyes, "'t is not the growing of hair that makes a friend."

"Now by St. Bavon," spoke up the wild creature who owned the threatened head, "here is too much a-talking to the lady."

"Ay, by St. Bavon," echoed the other "Wolf," "man to man, but maid to maid!"

"Thou art a swordless, pikeless, one-footed beggar," continued the first Wolf with sudden fierceness, "so I

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will not fight thee. But as to my jerkin, it is of good curried leather, which wears for twenty years."

"Methinks," said the ragged stranger, "that it hath already been nineteen years upon thy back."

"Let me entreat thee, Sir Stranger," said the girl quickly, "not to make my friends angry. They are the Holland Wolves. Thou hast heard of them, I know. Do not throw away thy life for the pleasure of a shrewd word. And Bilder, I pray thee and Hans think nothing of what the poor wanderer says."

"Do not pray to me, Wilhelmina," said the first of the Wolves, he who had been addressed as Bilder; "I am no saint that I should be prayed to. But command me; I will think no more of the foreigner. Let every rag to his back cry mercy for him."

"Ay," echoed Hans, "he lacks one foot of being a man; can we fight with a shadow? Command us, Wilhelmina."

"I pray thee, fair Wilhelmina," cried the stranger, "I pray thee, for sure thou art a saint, if ever fair face made a fair spirit, that I may join thy little troop of foot-soldiers. Command me also, Wilhelmina."

Wilhelmina's brother, a young man of medium height but of capacious girth and enormous weight, had showed signs for some time of getting ready to speak. He cleared his throat, breathed hard, and fastened his large eyes upon the stranger's face with increasing steadiness, as if they were about to come out at him. At last his mouth opened:

"Sir Stranger, will it please thee to sit in our cart till





“ ‘ Do not throw away thy life for the pleasure of a shrewd word ’ ”



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the army pass? For I perceive, whilst thou makest bold with words, thy foot is to thee a torment."

"There was never such a brother as Jan," cried Wilhelmina, trying to put an arm about the young man, but unable to extend her hand around the first turn. "He thinks of everything. Do take the seat, sir; it will ease thy pain, and therefore give us comfort."

"I understand well it will ease me," said the stranger, climbing laboriously up into the seat, "but how it may comfort another, I know not."

"It were easily explained," said the father. "Whenever we lift at another man's burden, we gain more strength to carry our own."

The stranger thought over these words, but could make nothing of them. He shook his head.

"That is not thy way of thinking," said Bilder, "and neither is it mine. By St. Bavon, thou canst not think what pain it gives me to see thee sitting in Wilhelmina's place. If it were not her express will I should pluck thee hence speedily! I love Wilhelmina, fellow, and cannot endure that another man should so much as lift his eyes unto her."

"Nor I," said Hans, shaking his shaggy head. "I also love her quite to the death."

"Good Bilder, good Hans!" remonstrated Wilhelmina soothingly, "you have promised—"

"Ay, we shall keep our promise," said Bilder. "We ask not for thy love till a full year, when thou shalt decide between us. But let this fellow know that we



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love thee. We would let every man in the Netherlands know the same."

"Ay," said Hans, "find us some one who has not heard the news, and we will inform him speedily."

"Here is devotion," said the stranger. "But I pray thee, maiden, tell me what army we await?"

At these words all who heard him stared in the utmost wonder. Jan would have exclaimed, but did not have time enough to get his voice to working.

"What army?" repeated Wilhelmina, looking up into his face with her red lips parted and her brown eyes opened wide; "and where hast thou been not to have heard of this day's coming?"

The stranger, looking down into the upturned face, answered slowly, for he wanted to prolong the present moment. She stood by the wheel near the end of the cushioned seat which supported him. She was as tall as her brother, and her height helped her to bear more pounds than another might have carried gracefully. Her limbs were modelled in broad sweeping curves, her bust was full and generous, her hands large and shapely, her feet moulded not only for beauty but for endurance. Her features were large, and her head was set upon a sturdy neck, whose dimpled fairness seemed to smile at the approach of Time. From her body there emanated an atmosphere of strength. Her face was neither regular in outline nor striking for the excellence of any feature; but there shone upon it the ruddy glow of a contented spirit, which has no prick of bodily infirmity to test its serenity. The unusually broad and open fore-

## COMING OF THE SPANIARDS

head, the heavy coils of brown hair, which needed just such a head to bear them easily, and the red mouth, perhaps too large, but never jealous of the flashing teeth, — these must have impressed any observer favorably. As for her massive form, her great strength, which was so apparent that it was oppressive to weaker souls, — this was another matter. The stranger would have reduced her at least a third, if the wave of his hand had carried with it the magic of his imagination.

“Where have I been?” he repeated. “Come, I will give thee a riddle, fair Wilhelmina, and thou shalt guess. I have been where women and children never come. I have been buried alive for two years, surrounded by silence, with austerity and sorrow for my companions.”

“I know what the fellow means,” cried Bilder.

“Ay, I know,” cried Hans, who was Bilder’s echo.

“Well, Hans,” said Wilhelmina mischievously, “come, tell us the answer!”

“Let Bilder tell,” said Hans sheepishly, shaking his long black hair about his eyes.

“A monastery,” said Bilder.

“Ay,” said Hans, “that is what I thought.”

“Yes,” said the stranger, “I have spent two years in a monastery. When my cell became intolerable, I fled as for my life, — and here I am. Thou art the first woman I have met who could take my heart and play upon it. I know if there is any music in my soul, thy touch could bring it forth!”

At these words Bilder and Hans glared savagely out

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of their red eyes, while Jan looked at his father. But Wilhelmina only laughed.

"How many tunes, Sir Stranger, have other girls played upon thee?" she inquired.

"I have been in love," he answered lightly, "for I am a man. My first sweetheart died of old age before I got to be twenty; the second married, but she did not marry me; the third would have married me whether I would or no, so I hid me to a monastery, thinking I would no more of women. I soon cooled toward a monastic life; but it took me two years to escape. Ah heaven! what a wretched dulness was my life! I thought I could never love again. But, thank God, I can love! I feel it in my veins."

At this point Jan, who had been gradually working up to the effort, spoke: "A monastery, yet thou art no monk! What then? A Spaniard?"

"Heaven forbid!" cried the young man.

"Amen!" exclaimed the little group as by a preconcerted signal.

The young man stared in wonder. "Here is no love for Spain," he said, "and yet the king of Spain is your own King Philip. But I am a Frenchman. My name is Norman Belle-Isle. Gentlemen," he added, turning his eyes from the glowing face of the maiden, "whenever it is a stand against Spain, count in Norman Belle-Isle."

"Caution, young man, caution!" said Wilhelmina's father sharply. "For God's sake, forbear!"

Bilder threw back his gigantic head, and raised his voice in stentorian tones: "Long live the Beggars!"



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Hans took up the shout that had more than once caused Philip the Second to tremble in far-away Seville :

“ Long live the Beggars ! ”

The hum of voices suddenly ceased as the multitude stretched their necks to see who had dared utter that proscribed party-cry. It was not taken up by the populace, although it echoed in their hearts. But fear kept them silent. Those farthest from the group whispered a question. The answer came to them, “ The Holland Wolves.”

“ They are bold men,” said one, “ but their time is not far ! ”

“ The Beggars ? ” repeated Norman. “ What mean these shaggy Wolves ? By Belle-Isle ! if Dutch Beggars are not long-lived they are different from the beggars of other countries.”

“ Bilder ! Hans ! ” said Wilhelmina’s father. “ If you care not for your own lives, will you involve my daughter in your ruin ? Remember us, and forbear. And thou, Belle-Isle, ask no questions concerning the Beggars. There is death in the very name.”

“ Then tell me, fair Wilhelmina,” said Norman, “ what army we are awaiting from Tirlémont. Methinks I hear a distant tramp that shakes the earth.”

“ Listen ! ” said Jan, holding up his enormous arm.

“ Ay, they are coming,” said his father.

“ God defend us ! ” whispered Wilhelmina.

“ Mother,” piped a child’s treble voice, “ they are coming, they are coming ! Oh, now I shall see the fine horses ! ”

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"Better thou wert dead!" moaned the woman, snatching the child to her heart.

Wilhelmina grew white, while Bilder and Hans, with clenched teeth, glared toward the closed gates of Tirlémont. All looked thither save Norman and Wilhelmina.

"Tell me what troubles thee," he said gently.

"Alas, Sir Stranger —"

"Nay, call me not stranger," he protested; "it closes the gate of my heart through which kind thoughts seek to run out to greet thee."

"But thou must know," she protested. "What walls so strong that they can keep ill news at bay?"

"Nay, by Belle-Isle, I know nothing of this matter."

"How strange," she said, "to hear thee swear by thine own self!"

"Ay, lady, but I know myself, so I know I swear by a true knight."

"The saints also are true, Belle-Isle."

"That may be, Wilhelmina. But I have found that whenever I am in a narrow pass, it is Belle-Isle and not any saint who plucks me out of danger. Hark! The deep rumble! Why dost thou cower and pale?"

"Alas, alas! they will soon be here,—the Spaniards,—the cruel,—hush! Yes, the army from Spain is coming. You have heard of the terrible Duke of Alva. He is at their head."

"Alva? A famous captain, an iron man, indeed! Why come he and his army into the Low Countries?"

"To enforce the Inquisition. Yes, Spain has sent the Inquisition into Holland. These Spaniards will be

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quartered upon us. We shall be at their mercy, Belle-Isle! See how my countrymen shrink with terror! Yet they are Catholics, even as I. That will not save us!"

"Why not, fair Wilhelmina? But I pray thee take thy place beside me, for I grieve to see thee stand so long."

Wilhelmina smiled. "I am strong, oh, so very strong!" she said, showing him her bared arm. "I never grow tired. I work all day long, and how I sleep!"

"I would I could see thee asleep!" he exclaimed.

Wilhelmina showed her teeth. "Father used to say I am prettiest when I am asleep," she observed.

"But," said Norman, "I should certainly wake thee up to have a glimpse of those brown eyes."

The brown eyes laughed at him, then grew sad. "Yes, it will not save us, that we are Catholics. We of the Netherlands are a liberty-loving people; we would not burn heretics or bury them alive. So we raised a party among us to resist the Spanish Inquisition. Margaret, Duchess of Parma — she is our Regent — looked from her window and saw our brave men marching down the street. In truth they did not make a brave show, for all who were mighty and rich were afraid to oppose King Philip. And what tyrants are power and wealth! He who owns them is owned by them. Well, the Duchess looked down, and her gentlemen laughed at the ragged patriots,—God bless them!—and they said, 'Look at the Beggars!' The men overheard that word. It was spoken in disdain, but they received

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it as their true name, and since then, how many times I have heard that cry, '*Vivent les Gueux!*' But now we hear it no more; for the King sends his army to overawe us, and the Duke of Alva, who will rule in the place of the Duchess, hates the very echo of our country's name. So, though we are all Catholics, we are under his wrath."

"What! is everybody a Catholic in the Low Countries?"

"Ay, everybody save the martyrs. And now that our most powerful friend, the best friend we simple people ever had, has been compelled to flee for his life,—I mean William the Silent—"

"The Prince of Orange?"

"Ay, the saints bless his pure soul!—we have only one friend left,—yonder he comes to meet the Spaniards."

From the direction of Brussels advanced a noble cavalcade, headed by Count Egmont. Scarcely had his company appeared in the distance when the gates of Tirlemont were thrown open, and the vanguard of the Spanish army issued forth.

"That is Count Egmont," said Wilhelmina, indicating the leader of the horsemen from Brussels. "My father is his retainer. See how tall he is, how delicate his features, how beautiful his flowing hair! Poor gentleman, God pity him!"

"And why?" asked Norman. "Does he not come to meet Alva? How gorgeous his apparel! Here is no room for pity."



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"Thou foolish knight!" said Wilhelmina. "Many a sorrow goes through the world with a smile. The life of our dear Count hangs upon the breath of Alva. We who are not blind know what will be the issue. But Count Egmont would not flee with Prince William. He knows he has always been faithful to the King, and the King has written him many letters of love and esteem. He will not be warned. Even when the King bade him turn against his own people and slay them, Count Egmont did not withhold his sword. Whatever the King wills, Egmont does. But we love him,—and that will ruin any man; for the breath of popular applause blows into flame the hatred of a tyrant."

"These are bold words, fair Wilhelmina!"

"I fear thee not, Belle-Isle. In such times as these, one learns to read a face without halting to spell."

"Then tell me what thou readest in my eyes," said Norman softly.

"I read," said Wilhelmina, "that thou wouldst never bring sorrow to a maiden,—so long as she be discreet."

"I would," he said fervently, "that a Spanish army might come to the Low Countries every day, if by its coming it gave me a sweet hour with thee! After that dry life in the monastery, I am like a parched wanderer of the desert come to a bubbling spring. I drink from thy brown eyes, and I feel a greenness springing up all along my wasted and desolate courses. Life surges in upon me once more, and I smell the salt air of love that blows from over its boundless surface."

"Thou dost gaze upon me as if I were a star," said

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Wilhelmina, showing her teeth. "Nay, Belle-Isle, I am only a simple maid, one of the lowly. I do not belong to thy class, I think. See how large I am, — look at these hands, they are made for toil. And these feet in their great wooden shoes, — what would a lady do with them? They were never formed to rest in carriages, but to tramp the roads, and bear heavy burdens. I am so big; do you not observe it? Look at Jan. I am like him, only I am a woman, — God bless him, he is my brother! — the sweetest boy of all Holland! And I can eat three meals a day and be hungry between them. There is nothing dainty nor noble about me, unless, I pray God, my heart. But hush! They will meet here."

Count Egmont had timed his approach that he might encounter the Duke of Alva where his retainers were collected. The Spanish army halted. At its head rode the "Iron Duke," surrounded by his most powerful followers. Alva was tall and thin, with the erect carriage of one who has led many armies to victory. His cheeks were yellow, his eyes small, dark, and glittering, his white beard fell upon his breast in two waving divisions. His features were stern almost to ferocity. He had come in his old age, full of honors, to crush from the Netherlands the few sparks of patriotism and liberty that still remained. He had come with that bitter hatred toward the natives which one feels only against the victim his hand is about to destroy. He felt the helplessness of his prey, but this powerlessness aroused him to malignant cruelty, as if he despised the devoted

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people who had not the spirit to utter a cry against his mailed hand. He had not the excuse of fanaticism for his rapacious career. His only religion was his fidelity to Philip the Second. It was the will of the King that the Dutch should be scourged for their past dream of liberty, lashed to complete abjectness; and Alva had come to please his sovereign. The Spaniards and mercenaries who came in his train shared his hatred and contempt for the people. They stared insolently at the throng which had assembled to give them the semblance of a welcome. They were impatient for the time when they might be turned loose upon the homes of these trembling wretches; when permission might be given them to slay, ravage, and plunder. The mercenaries had no hope of reward for their labors and privations, save such reward as they might wrest as booty from the Dutch; but the Spaniards had another spur to their devotion. They would demand a booty full as rich; but they would also have the pleasure of slaying dangerous enemies to the Church.

As Norman Belle-Isle gazed upon the concourse with the zest of one watching a magnificent pageant, his attention was claimed by two horsemen who rode on the left of the Duke of Alva, one an old man, the other his young esquire. The old man, like all the Spanish nobles, wore a suit of gilded armor that caused the eyes to burn. His face was dark and stern, and the gaze he disdainfully cast upon those who lined the road was full of cold hatred. But it was the young esquire who instantly claimed Belle-Isle's attention, — a slender youth,

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scarcely of medium height, whose form, delicate and exquisite in its proportions, was ill suited to the war-like garb. The face was extremely engaging, and while no kindness beamed upon its features, they were of so noble a cast that scorn added a striking but haughty beauty. The eyes were of a pure French type, black, sparkling, and liquid. The lips were thin and mobile, and they assumed a little pout of contemptuous arrogance.

Wilhelmina, feeling that a crisis in the lives of those she loved was at hand, unconsciously deserted Belle-Isle, and slipped between her father and brother, laying a hand upon the arm of each. She, also, was struck by the esquire's form and face. "Jan," she whispered, "see the Spanish boy who carries the old man's weapon. What weapon is it, Jan?"

The other stared at the esquire with all his might, his mouth slowly opening in the meantime. Count Egmont who was near at hand, sent forward his esquire to announce his name to the Duke.

"The Count of Egmont?" repeated Alva. He turned to the old man whose weapon was carried by the beautiful youth. "Gonzalvo," he said in a loud voice, "behold the greatest of all heretics!" He spoke for Egmont to hear, but the Count made no sign. He had deliberately chosen between flight with the Prince of Orange, and the gratitude of his King. The hatred of Alva was apparent to all. But the Count hoped to remove it by intimate intercourse.

Egmont now rode forward, and these two saluted, --



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the Netherlander with the proud confidence of an innocent and too sanguine man, Alva with the insolence he was at the moment unable to disguise.

"The Duke of Alva is welcome," said Egmont, "and the provinces send him greeting."

"The Count of Egmont," returned the Spaniard, "might have spared me the trouble of making this long journey in my old age."

Egmont pretended not to understand the dangerous meaning hidden under these words.

But soon the Duke bethought him of the King's directions; how Egmont was first to be lulled to a sense of security, then destroyed. By an effort he smothered his real feelings, spoke more gently, and put his arm about Egmont's neck. They rode toward Brussels side by side in friendly conversation.

Bilder turned to the father of Wilhelmina. "Now, Hendrik," he said, his red eyes glaring with passion, "shall we raise a shout for the Count?"

"Not at thy peril!" cried Hendrik. "It would infuriate the Duke and his soldiers."

Bilder threw his arms about Hans, and whispered in his ear in a gurgling voice, as if about to choke: "Long live the Beggars!"

The Spaniard who had been addressed by the Duke as Gonzalvo, and who had fallen behind Alva and Egmont, passed with a scowl at the Holland Wolves. He had seen the fury in their faces, and half guessed their words. Behind him came the beautiful esquire, who looked carelessly at the wild unkempt creatures, then discovered

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Belle-Isle, whose seat in Hendrik's cart brought him above the heads of the people. The young Spaniard scanned the Frenchman curiously, and suddenly raised a finger as in warning, while the habitual look of haughty scorn softened. There was then no doubt that, striking as that face was in its imperiousness, its charm was ten-fold greater in its gentleness. No one in the throng knew toward whom the eyes of the esquire were directed, save the young man who bore their fire. Belle-Isle rose in the cart, and pointed solemnly above his head. The Spaniard quickly made the sign of the cross. Instantly those who lined the road imitated the gesture, their arms moving almost in unison. The procession had now carried Gonzalvo and his companion beyond the spot, but the young horseman looked back at the Frenchman. Belle-Isle stood still pointing solemnly upward. He did not make the sign of the cross.

Gonzalvo and his esquire were hidden from sight by the infantry and light horse. The clank of arms and the tramp of hoofs made the air tremble. The golden armor glowed like lamps of fire in the ranks. Jan turned to Wilhelmina, and answered the question she had asked him some time ago: "I know not, sister."

"Perchance the stranger knows," said Wilhelmina. "He knows a many thing that is hidden to us simple folk." She came to the cart. Norman saw her coming, and it suddenly struck him with force that there was too much of her. He secretly chided nature for being so generous. The face and form of the Spaniard still clung to his eyes.

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"Belle-Isle, canst tell us what weapon every esquire carries?"

"Ay, they are muskets, Wilhelmina, a new weapon, and deadly. But didst observe the Spanish esquire who made the sign of the cross?"

"Ay, indeed. What a womanly man!" cried Wilhelmina, showing her teeth. "His arms and legs remind me of my play-days when I would make a body of clay and stick four straws at the corners for limbs."

"Why, it may be that there was not enough to his legs and arms," said Belle-Isle, "but it was not of such matters I thought. It was of his face. By Belle-Isle! what beauty, what exquisite grace!"

"That is true," said Wilhelmina, "but I think Bilder or Hans is more of a man."

"Bilder! Hans! Oh, Wilhelmina, mention not such hairy savages in the same breath! I hope thou wilt never take one of these wild creatures into thy favor!"

"When I marry," said Wilhelmina, "it will be a man strong enough to carry me out of danger. Dost think that Spaniard could so much as lift me from the ground? I would crush his puny body with my weight! It is all very well, Belle-Isle, to laugh at the Wolves because they are uncouth. But I prefer a man whose beauty is centred in his heart and not spread out all over his person."

"Wilhelmina, I shudder to hear you talk in this wise. Such things as legs and arms and people's bodies,—are they to be discussed as topics of the day? There is a certain robustious greatness in thy

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talk, Wilhelmina, a bold and fresh seizing upon subjects that makes me tremble. I know not what thou wilt come upon at thy next turning, and I sit apprehensive."

"I weary thee with my idle words. But I have told thee I am no gentle. I say what I think, — so that I offend no one, — and if I do not displease God, thou must make shift to bear it. But look! Ah, what is this? What curious warriors! They be women as I live! See, they ride from Tirlemont, they follow companies of light horse. St. Bavon! Now, what make they in the Spanish army?"

"This is a wonderful thing!" said Norman, staring.

"Spanish women!" continued Wilhelmina. "Look how many! They are not ladies, I warrant." After a long silence she spoke: "I have counted one thousand, and still they pour from Tirlemont. Now I know what those wretches be!"

Belle-Isle groaned. "I beseech thee, Wilhelmina, say no more on the matter."

"They be brazen creatures!" cried Wilhelmina, her eyes flashing fire. "This is how the Duke of Alva comes with his Catholic army to enforce the true religion upon us who are already Catholics! My God, to what has my country fallen!" She began to weep.

Her hand grasped the end of the seat. Belle-Isle laid his hand upon hers and caressed it gently. "There, there, Wilhelmina, I cannot endure to see thee weep, so fair, so strong! Do not despair; God will never forsake a land where freedom cries for a voice."



## COMING OF THE SPANIARDS

She turned her hand up, and clasped his. "Thou art a good young man," she said, pressing his hand warmly.

"Then look up, Wilhelmina, and let the sun shine in thine eyes after the rain. What a sight thou art missing! Still they come!"

There were, indeed, two thousand of this division of Alva's army.

"I will not look at them," said Wilhelmina. "They be shameless and besotted devils. I will not look into their low faces!"

"There be some of them passing fair," observed Belle-Isle. Wilhelmina tore away her hand, and ran back to her father. But Hendrik had seen all he could endure. "Let us return home," he said.

"Sir," said Belle-Isle, "I thank thee for thy kindness. When my foot is well, it will run to do thee a service."

"Whither art thou bound?" asked Hendrik.

"I have no home," said Norman. "I am running away from a German monastery, but whither I run is no matter to me."

"How wilt find shelter?" asked Hendrik. "These soldiers will now drain the substance of the willing and the unwilling. Who can live without a sword in his hand?"

"Indeed, Hendrik, I have nothing in the world."

"Jan," said his father, "let us take him to our home, until his foot is healed."

"Not so," spoke up Bilder. "Shall we house this

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beggar with Wilhelmina? Who can tell what he is, or how her fancy may play?"

"No," said Hans, "he and Wilhelmina have seen more of each other now than the country has seen of her King."

"Let him go his way," said Bilder, "and let his way lead from thy door, Hendrik Janssen."

"Ay," said Hans, "and from Wilhelmina's window!"

"By Belle-Isle!" said the owner of that name, "this is embarrassing, good people. I pray thee, Jan, speak up and decide the point, and if I must say farewell, I will also give you God's blessing."

Jan, who had been meditating upon the point with ponderous solemnity, now spoke. "Since Wilhelmina is the objection, let us leave it to her."

"No, no, no!" cried Bilder. "We know what she will say!"

"Jan, I leave it to thee," said his father.

"Father, this is too sudden. I cannot weigh the reasons for and against his coming to our house. I dare not say 'No,' for fear I might do him an injustice. And I dread to say 'Yes,' — I know not why."

"Then he shall come with us," said Hendrik. "I decide for the sake of his wounded foot."

"I warn thee, Hendrik!" cried Bilder.

"Yes, we warn thee!" echoed Hans.

"If it had been left to me," said Wilhelmina, in a voice that sounded almost sullen, "I would have said, as Bilder said, 'No, no, no!'"

"Then let us leave it to her!" cried Bilder.

## COMING OF THE SPANIARDS

“It is decided,” said Hendrik. “Wilhelmina, thou and I shall ride in the seat, and let the Frenchman rest as he may in the body of the cart. Jan, thou and Bilder and Hans shall come speedily after us, and so, forward to Brussels!”

“I would I had said, ‘No,’” observed Jan, thoughtfully.

## *Chapter Two*

### *A MAIDEN OF HOLLAND*

**T**HE Spanish army had been divided; only three companies of light horse followed the infantry that marched behind the Duke of Alva toward Brussels. After them came the women whose beauty had so offended Wilhelmina. The women were followed by wagons and camp followers, bearing tents and camp furniture. When these had passed, the natives who had lined the road sullenly dispersed. Hendrik drove, and Wilhelmina sat beside him. Both were immersed in sombre thought, and the French guest did not disturb them. Looking back, he saw Jan and the Holland Wolves following in the middle of the road, the dust rolling under their ponderous tread. Bilder, seeing he was observed, raised his arm, and shook his fist at Belle-Isle. Hans imitated his gesture. The Frenchman waved his hand in graceful salute, then forgot their existence.

At last they passed the spot where the soldiers were preparing to encamp, outside the walls of Brussels. Soon after, Hendrik Janssen drove under the Louvain gate, through which Alva and Egmont had passed. The capital of the province of Brabant, now the capital



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of all the Netherlands, was at this time about five hundred years old. It contained one hundred thousand souls. Built upon the side of a sweeping promontory, its roads were far apart near the city walls, but as they ran up the slope they drew close together, while at regular intervals they were cut by parallel roads running around the ascent. Belle-Isle found many magnificent buildings, and more than one lofty tower, such as that of the town-house, which lifted its gorgeously embroidered form three hundred and sixty feet in the air. But the ducal palace with its trim lawns and softened woods seemed lifted like a picture hung against the curtain of the sky, for the delight of men.

Belle-Isle drew in his breath in a rapture that could find no words sufficiently delicate for its expression. But Hendrik and his daughter, too used to these sights to feel surprise, and too disheartened by the coming of the Spaniards to find pleasure in the rich homes of other people, uttered no word. The horse was turned aside, and directed toward that low, damp part of the city which adjoins the Senne. They entered a dark, narrow street with a gutter down its middle after the approved fashion, on either side of which were tall houses with curious gables and elbowing porches. Hendrik Janssen stopped before a house which looked upon a sluggish blackened canal, whose mouth, the Senne, was two blocks away. Wilhelmina sprang to the ground with a lightness her mature form did not promise.

"This is my home," said Hendrik to Belle-Isle. "Thou art welcome. Wilhelmina will show thee the

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way. I must take this horse home ; it belongs to Count Egmont. He was kind enough to lend it that my daughter might see the army. He is very good, — God have mercy upon him ! ”

“ But why,” Belle-Isle answered, slowly climbing down to the slippery cobblestones that sloped toward the gutter, “ why didst thou not warn this noble gentleman of his danger ? ”

“ Hush ! ” said Hendrik quickly. “ Remember we are in the city.” As he turned the horse about he added, “ But it is no use. He will not believe us.” Belle-Isle was left standing near Wilhelmina Janssen.

“ This way,” said the girl, turning her back upon the young man and approaching the house with drooping head. She unlocked the door and they entered a large apartment, the young man leaning heavily upon his stick. The room was so clean that its tiled floor glistened. The walls were of white stone, and the windows, each containing many small lozenge-shaped panes fastened together with lead, were divided by pillars of stone, which were themselves divided by stone cross-pieces. Just within the door was the receptacle for holy water, and the hand-besom. At the farther end was a huge fireplace, and on either side, and above the black opening, hung shining vessels and utensils of curious shapes. But however curious they might be to an unused eye, there was a heavy intelligible smile in each glittering surface. Wilhelmina stepped to the holy water, dipped in a long shapely finger, and crossed herself. Then she walked toward the fireplace.

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"Be seated," she said, coldly.

"No," said Belle-Isle, "Heaven forbid that I ever sit down where I am unwelcome! And so, fare thee well, Wilhelmina; tell thy father I left him my benison." Whereupon he turned about and stalked from the house with as much dignity as his bandaged foot and ragged back would allow. He had scarcely slammed the door behind him when it was opened by the firm hand of Wilhelmina.

"Now where wilt thou go, sir?" she demanded sternly. "And where wilt thou find food? Come back into the house, sir, for thou art welcome."

"What care I for food?" cried Belle-Isle. "It is kindness for which I hunger, not meat and drink. How sayest thou I am welcome when never a look or word wilt thou throw me? Nay, I will hence!"

"And perchance wilt go unto those fair damsels whose beauty caused thee to forget my tears," she said bitterly.

"Ay, and perchance I shall," he cried fiercely. At that Wilhelmina darted out of the door and seizing him by the arm, got him into the house with such vigor that his stick was sent flying into the canal. "Rest!" she said, pushing him into a chair.

"By Belle-Isle!" he cried, the tears starting to his eyes, "I am as weak as a kitten in thy fist. The monastery-life hath wasted me to an infant, and my foot hath turned an accursed traitor to my cause."

"I have much muscle," said Wilhelmina grimly.

"Ay," said Belle-Isle, "I believe thee. And it is little to thy credit, seeing thou art a woman and canst not

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go up and down the world with a sword in thy hand, but must needs vent thy unmaidenly strength in racking my poor foot."

"Thy foot? Now what words are these?"

"They are true words; take them and digest them. For in dragging me about like an old doll, didst not beat my crippled foot most despitefully against the threshold?"

"Now the saints forbid!" cried Wilhelmina, sinking upon her knees before him. "Poor foot, I must make what amends I may!"

"What thing is this?" cried Belle-Isle nervously. "Take thy hands away, maiden."

"Why, what is this ado?" returned the maiden impatiently. "Hold still, — the saints pity thee! I will have off this begrimed bandage. Oh, that such unseemly rags should ever enter my clean house!"

"I will not have thee touching my foot!" cried Belle-Isle with spirit. "Thou, a tender maiden — such things are not for thy pretty hands. Leave me alone, Wilhelmina, do not humble thyself in such mean fashion. But if the foot must be attended, call in some old woman, or better still, some man with a man's feet at the end of him."

Wilhelmina arose and departed as if to obey his wish. But the next moment she returned with a basin of water. Down she sank upon her knees, with a toss of her head.

"I am the old woman who will attend to this case," she said calmly. "Thou talkest as if a man were some mystery, and his feet were gods, not to be looked upon."



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A man's foot is naught to me but a member set with toes. I pray thee, sir, be not so particular. Thou canst not have thy foot touched by a maiden; but thou canst gloat upon the beauty of brazen Spanish wretches with shameless flouting airs."

"Wilhelmina, think not so of me. Do I not despise them from my soul?"

"Thou saidst they be fair," she pouted.

"I jested. They be painted Jezebels!" he cried.

"And thou hadst no pleasure in the gazing?"

"By my soul, my heart grew sick as they passed by in their cloud of musk."

"I am glad, Belle-Isle, — for thy sake. Thou art a pure young man. Now dost thou not feel better with clean feet and this fresh cloth around the cruel bruise?"

"I am much ashamed," said Belle-Isle, blushing.

Wilhelmina arose and patted his shoulder with great good humor. "There, there, Belle-Isle, — the Lord love thee! — be not ashamed! I will not drag thee about any more. Now I must build us a great fire and begin our dinner, for the Wolves are always hungry, and so, also, is Jan. He is not fat for nothing, I promise thee!" She carried away the basin, and when she returned to the room she knelt before the fireplace and arranged the fag-gots under the peat.

"What a picture thou art!" cried Belle-Isle, watching her rounded form as it sank so unconsciously into different attitudes of grace.

"I, a picture?" echoed the girl, as she struck her flint.

"Thou art no artist, if a great woman such as I, — in all

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but years, — for, big as I am, I am only eighteen — How old art thou, if it please thee?"

"Twenty-two, and a few months to spare."

"It is a good age," she said, as a little blaze grew under the breath of her bellows. "I like twenty-two."

"So do I," said Belle-Isle, with a sudden flashing smile. "Oh, what joy it is to live!"

Wilhelmina's face clouded. "Ay, my friend, what joy when honest toil has its reward, and religion wears no chains. I know not how I can smile, while my country is at the mercy of Spain. It is a strange thing that when a great misfortune broods over the soul, every tiny sunbeam that struggles through the black cloud can find a reflecting spot. It is so now. I feel my country is doomed. Dear Count of Egmont, so trusting and loyal to the King,—I fear harm will befall him. And my father, known to be his friend as well as dependent,—will not the shadow cross his life, too? And yet I can smile at thy light words, thou merry boy!" She turned from the fire and looked at him, as if she were many years older and knew how to humor his moods. The white blaze of the faggots reddened under the edge of the peat, and a rosy glow was thrown upon her which brought out every curve and grace, for the room had begun to grow dark. The red glare was caught in her hair, where it changed her brown tresses to coils of burnished copper. It painted her cheeks in the hue of the red rose, it set burning coals in the depths of her eyes.

"Wilhelmina!" he exclaimed. Then he added, "But ever thou speakest as if I were a child. Fair maiden,

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credit my years with wisdom. Look not upon me as if I were a boy. I am a man, Wilhelmina; I have seen the world. I pray thee look up to me in some particular, — thou beautiful maiden! Oh, Wilhelmina, turn thy head a little toward the hearth, for an envious shadow falls upon thy ear."

Wilhelmina jumped up. "I have no time to chase shadows off my ears," she cried gayly; "I must make a hot stew and bring gladness to the stomachs of my friends."

"Oh, Wilhemina! Stomachs!"

"And why not stomachs, foolish lad?"

"I am no lad," cried Belle-Isle. "And as to stomachs, I cannot bear thee to have such a manner of speech, maiden. Thou art like a sweet honeycomb from which issue words like bees with stings in their tails. Wilt thou not learn to speak after the manner — the manner of —"

"Thou wouldst say after the manner of noble ladies," said the girl; "but I am no lady. However, I am ready to learn in what respect the subject of tails hath a higher standing above a discourse on stomachs. And as for the wisdom of thy years, it is naught. Thou hast seen the world. But more is to be learned," she continued, as she set about the evening's repast, "in looking into the hearts of those we love than in travelling from mountain to sea. Thou knowest how men and women look, but I know how a few people think and feel. Therefore I am older than thou, for my knowledge is deeper. See, I can read thee through and through, Belle-Isle, but

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thou canst get no deeper into me than my hair and eyes."

"Say not thou canst read me through and through," said the Frenchman, "for there are depths in my nature which even I have not sounded, terrible depths, from which I shrink with a shudder!"

Wilhelmina laughed. "Here," she said, "will be a savory mess ere long; we will sound it together." She stirred vigorously in a large kettle.

"Thou wilt not believe me," he cried desperately. "Well, then, I will tell thee a thing. Within me are two natures, each different from the other."

"That is no great thing," she cried, "there are four natures in me: the first wants to be good, and the second would rather not; the third asks for food and sleep and a quiet rest in the chimney-corner and a smile from a friend, — I like that third nature better than all, but it must not be humored over much, for it means idleness and sloth. And there is a fourth nature, — I am afraid of it; sometimes it stirs within like the turn of a knife in a wound; sometimes I can forget it altogether."

"That is passing strange," cried Belle-Isle. "Now, for what doth this fourth part of thee clamor?"

"I know not," said Wilhelmina, "unless it be for — love."

"Now who knows," cried Belle-Isle, "but I was sent hither to satisfy that very fourth part of thee?"

Wilhelmina showed her teeth at him most provokingly, but she was too much occupied in hanging the



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kettle over the fire to reply. At this moment Jan and the Holland Wolves tramped into the room.

"What do I see?" cried Bilder angrily. "The maid and the Frenchman alone together! Now why does Hendrik leave you twain to concoct sentiment?"

"The two of them!" cried Hans. "The two of them!"

"Have no fear," cried the girl cheerfully. "He hath made no attempt to eat me up."

"I like not what I see," growled Bilder.

"Then close thine eyes and lift up thy nose," said the girl, "for, I promise thee, a most savory odor will presently arise and woo thy soul, — for I must not say thy stomach, Bilder; it is shame to thee to carry such an organ under thy jerkin of curried leather."

The men sat down heavily, and with Belle-Isle they formed a semicircle, which was presently completed by the return of Hendrik. The men fastened their eyes upon the girl and the kettle, the former delighting their eyes, and the latter lifting them up in an ecstasy of anticipation; for a warm, heavy, tingling odor issued from the bubbling stew. Bilder smacked his lips, and thrust a fragment of his huge whiskers between his teeth to stay his appetite. Hans repeatedly moistened his lips with his tongue and then rubbed them with the back of his hairy hand. But Jan, the picture of impassive, immovable patience, stared straight at the kettle with large eyes, and stirred not a muscle.

"I returned the horse," said Hendrik. "The Count had gone to the Regent's, — there to meet Alva. You

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were very indiscreet, to-day, crying 'Long live the Beggars!' I heard some one speak of it as I passed along the canal. I heard your names spoken in anger. I fear they will fall upon you this night."

"By St. Bavon!" cried Hans, striking the floor impatiently with his heels, "speak me no words, Hendrik, till I have fallen upon this stew, for I cannot endure to be trifled with. I mean no offence, good friend, but give o'er I pray, for I can think of nothing but the taste that must soon tickle my palate."

"I have my reward when I cook for Bilder and Hans," said Wilhelmina smiling. "I would rather see them eat than feed myself; their teeth are so big and sharp and they clutch their victuals so lustily." Belle-Isle shuddered.

"If thou wilt marry me," cried Bilder, "I will so delight thee three times a day!"

"I can eat quicker than Bilder,—and more," cried Hans. "Just watch us to-night and see who gets through first without choking."

"'Tis false!" shouted Bilder, starting up in a passion. "Hans Poot, I tell thee, 't is false! I can get a chicken down my throat whilst thou art sticking at the feathers."

"Bilder Kopperzoon!" roared Hans, springing to his enormous feet, "an thou say word of mine is false —"

"Good Bilder, good Hans!" remonstrated Wilhelmina, "remember the promise. Not for a year are you to come to any quarrel on my account."

"Ay," growled Bilder, sinking back in his chair, "it is true."

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"Ay," said Hans. "But on that day, the one of us thou dost not choose —"

"Will slay the other," said Bilder, "an he be given power of God."

"It is well spoken!" cried Hans. "Come, Bilder, we must not quarrel yet." They shook hands.

"And will you treat me so spitefully on my wedding-day, as to make me a widow?" cried the girl, hiding her face, so they could not know if she were in earnest.

"Ay," said Bilder, "we have sworn to fight a duel on thy marriage-day."

"But grieve not, Wilhelmina," said Hans soothingly, "one of us will be left for thee. If not thy husband, the other, who loves thee full as headily."

At this moment Jan announced his mind. "Bilder, thou and Hans have no right to come into my father's house and quarrel, leaping to your feet as if there were bees in your doublets. This is a home of peace and love, and ye shall not come here and talk of duels and husbands and such incendiary subjects."

"With submission, Jan, with submission," growled Bilder.

"We were wrong," said Hans. "At least Bilder was."

"Now, may I ask," spoke up Belle-Isle, "if it is really settled and predestined that Wilhelmina must marry one of you fair gentlemen this day a year?"

"Ay," said Bilder, "it is predestined and settled, as far as any beggar of a Frenchman is concerned."

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"It is no such thing, Bilder Kopperzoon!" cried Wilhelmina sharply. "An thou cast the word 'beggar' at the poor boy again, I will cast my iron ladle at thy head!"

"Wilhelmina," said her father, "if I had not known thee from the beginning, I would sometimes think thee a man disguised as a maid!" Wilhelmina looked as if she had suddenly received a blow, for Hendrik seldom spoke in censure. She subsided slowly into a chair, and put her face in her arms, the ladle sticking straight from her shoulder. The Wolves looked at the woful figure and blinked their eyes, and groaned and tapped the floor with their iron heels. Hendrik, feeling that he had done his duty, but afraid he would undo it if he witnessed his daughter's sorrow, strode sternly from the room. Jan slowly raised his ponderous form from his great chair and marched over to Wilhelmina. He laid his massive red hand upon her shaking shoulder. At that, Wilhelmina began to sob.

"Sister," said Jan, "thou knowest our father spoke for the best, for seeing we have no mother, who else may tell thee of little defects? I know thou art at times a trifle,—we may not say like a man, but let us say, not like a woman,—God bless thy sweet soul and the saints preserve thee! Now if thou wilt but think, thou must know it is not for sweet girls to cast iron ladles at the heads of friends."

"Let her cast her ladle at me!" roared Bilder. "Who, in God's name, will say her nay? Not I, by St. Bavon!"



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"Everybody finds fault with me," sobbed Wilhelmina. "I wonder why I was not born to people's tastes!"

Jan drew her arms apart and placed them about his neck, and lifted her up against his enormous breast. "Now as God lives, sister," he cried, "thou art so much to my taste that other damsels seem insipid. Everything in life is sweeter to me because my sister walks the earth, and scatters her smiles along my path. And so it is with our father. I know he is even now in tears, poor body, because he felt compelled to speak up and prevent a casting of ladles."

"Let us go find him, Jan. Am I a pleasure to thee, brother, at all times, even when I am wicked?"

"Ay, thou art at times wicked," said Jan, "but I love thee all the better for that. Thank God there is no saint's soul in this sister's body!"

"Why, Jan! To speak so! But poor father —"

"Then come, sister, let us find him."

"Might not we first set the stew upon the table?" suggested Hans Poot timidly. No one heeded him. Brother and sister marched to the door, and just without they discovered Hendrik, with his knuckles in his eyes. Wilhelmina gave a cry, and leaving her brother, ran and threw her arms about the gray head.

"I will not throw that iron ladle, father!" she exclaimed, laughing and crying at the same time. "And I will not be so foolish again as to mind it when thou scoldest me for my wickedness."

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"Nay, daughter, but did I scold thee?"

"Oh, but indeed thou didst, and before all that company! How thou didst speak to me, — so fierce!"

"Did I speak fierce, daughter?"

"But I will be better, father; it has done me good. Only, — I am so used to thinking whatever I do is right! Thou must promise to scold me whenever I need it, — that must be every day, I know. Yes it must, I know it; I am a wicked girl, — Jan says so."

Jan opened his mouth.

"Don't you say a word, Jan!" cried Wilhelmina, running to give him a hearty kiss that echoed in the room. "It will tire thee out, and I want thee to enjoy the stew."

"I think it is burning," said Hans resignedly.

Wilhelmina laughed merrily, the tears still glistening on her cheeks. They were presently seated at the table, where Bilder and Hans occasionally called upon the girl to watch them dispatch their food. The noise they made in their emulous speed caused Belle-Isle many a shudder. But it was long since he had received a full meal, and he made shift to enjoy himself heartily by keeping his observation guarded from the beards of the Wolves. It grew dark before the meal had come to an end, and Wilhelmina lighted candles and set them at either end of the table. There was not much talking. There was no room for words to issue from the mouths of Bilder and Hans. Hendrik, who appeared abnormally small and delicate in contrast with his son and daughter, was sad, and ate but little. Wilhelmina

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sat next to Belle-Isle when she was not bustling about on errands of hospitality. Once he looked up and found her beaming upon him, with a large piece of brown bread poised in her hand.

"God bless the boy," she said, showing her teeth, "how he eats!" Then she caught one end of the bread in her strong teeth, and tore off a bite that would have choked the Frenchman. When the meal was at an end, the men sat solemnly along the wall, watching the girl clear away the supper. Presently she cried out, "Come, come, will no one say a word? I am not a mystery play to be stared at!"

"Shall I tell how I rescued the burgomaster of Valenciennes," said Bilder, "and hewed me three Flemish heads off Flemish bodies in the encounter?"

"Ay, let us hear it," cried Hans admiringly.

"No, no," exclaimed Wilhelmina, as she busied about her work. "I have heard it so often that I no longer feel sorrow for the Flemish."

"Or how we got to be called Holland Wolves?"

"Good Bilder, forbear. An old story is like an old horse that casts a shoe every time it is ridden, until it hobbles so painfully we say, 'Turn it out to die!' — so let us have a new matter. And that will be the story of Belle-Isle."

"Ach!" exclaimed Bilder, "so that was what thy horse was leading up to!"

"I fear," said Belle-Isle, "that my story will be found of little interest."

"Then spare us," cried Hans, looking at Bilder.

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"But it may interest, after all," said the Frenchman, rather hurriedly.

"Let us not follow such a doubtful guide," said Bilder, "for he seems unacquainted with his own country."

Jan spoke: "Bilder, Hans, — peace! He is our guest and he hath such a desire to tell his tale, no one shall say him nay. Proceed, Sir Stranger, and whether it interest us or no, I doubt not it will give thee cheer. And as for us, however it may fare, it cannot last forever, so after this story there will be other things in life."

"I was born —" said Belle-Isle.

"He will begin at the beginning," sighed Bilder.

"Ay," sighed Hans, "he will not spare us a circumstance. But proceed, Frenchman, for Jan wills it. Now thou art born, proceed."

"Hark!" said Hendrik, rousing himself from his gloomy meditations, "are there not voices at the door?"

"They come not hither," said Bilder; "continue, Frenchman, for thou art still in the cradle."

"My father was already dead," said Belle-Isle, "and my mother died at my birth. I was taken to be raised by an only relative, an aunt, who died when I was ten."

"Now, this is cheerful matter," said Bilder, looking at Hans.

"Interrupt not," said Hans with pretended sternness.

"Advance, Frenchman. Didst thou die next?"

"The voices are certainly at the door," said Jan, who had been listening to determine this point. "Now they cease."



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The door opened cautiously, and a face looked in.

"Joost van Boendale!" cried Hendrik. "Welcome!" An old man entered who, despite his snowy hair and beard, appeared strong and erect. There was a rosy glow of health in his cheek, that gave a quaint touch of contrast to his appearance. Belle-Isle was reminded of red apples laid in the snow. Joost closed the door behind him.

"No," he said, "I will not sit with you. The nets are closing about the feet of the faithful of the Lord. Friend Hendrik, I come upon an errand of warning."

"Dear Joost," said Hendrik, embracing him, "take heed to thyself. We are never in such danger as thou."

"Think not so, Hendrik. It is true I am an Associate of the Brethren of the Confession of Augsburg, and you are Catholics. But none the less are you hated of the King and our new master, the Duke of Alva."

"We love our country," said Hendrik, "therefore the King has sent an army to destroy us. But the King is so staunch a Catholic, he must favor us rather than thee."

"I left my retreat this night," said Joost, holding up his hand to make his words more impressive, "because I learned that at two in the morning soldiers will be sent hither to seize the Holland Wolves. Bilder and Hans, if you are not in hiding at that hour, you are lost."

"We thank thee," said Bilder; "we will not be found at that hour. Ay, we will wander forth as has been our wont in years past, without a home, without a friend save our country. May the kind God keep hell wide open

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while we are about our work, for we will send a many Spaniard to warm at its fires ! ”

“ I did not look for this so soon,” said Hans. “ I thought it would take Alva a few weeks to learn the lay of the land. And he hath heard of the Wolves already ? ”

“ He knew everything before he traversed Burgundy and Lorraine ; nay, before he embarked at Carthage. So I came to tell you, dear friends ; for, though true Catholics, you are also true patriots ! ”

“ Long live the Beggars ! ” cried Bilder.

“ As for me,” continued Joost, “ for the sake of my daughter, I keep closely hidden. For when I walk abroad and see the blindness of the age, the word of God strives to issue from my lips. If it were not for her, Hendrik, I would proclaim the wonderful love of our Creator, which is not measured by repetitions of Ave Marias. When I see braver men than I dragged to the stake to suffer for the cause of truth and virtue, I feel impelled to rush to the executioner and command him to accept me, as another sacrifice to my dear Master. But, alas ! what will become of my child when I am taken from her ? ”

“ Ay, Joost, I beseech thee never forget that. Besides, canst not do more by living than by dying ? ”

“ I know not,” said Joost thoughtfully. “ Every fire kindled under a so-called heretic is a beacon fire, calling our countrymen to arms. How else may we show our absolute sincerity ? Who can question the faith of a man when he gives his life as its proof ? ”

## A MAIDEN OF HOLLAND

"But thy daughter, Kenau?" said Wilhelmina with a shudder.

"Alas!" groaned Joost. "And yet He says, 'Leave all and follow me.'"

"But if it should happen," suggested Hendrik, "that Luther and Calvin have made a mistake after all? Then there were a life thrown away!"

"Hendrik," said Joost, "wilt come and talk with me over this matter?"

"Ay, Joost, I will hear thee. I have long said thee nay. But I have been thinking,—in truth, it was Jan who thought of it first; for he hath wise thoughts, an ye give him much time and plenty of room,—that no man fears to hear the opposite of a question, unless insecure in his own position."

"Thank God that thou wilt hear me!" cried Joost. "I ask no more. Then come with me. But I had another matter to speak of. As I came to thy door, I was accosted by a Spanish soldier."

"We heard voices at the door," said Hans.

"He was sent by one of the highest officers in the Spanish army,—so at least he told me. He took me for thee, Hendrik, entering my own door. I dared not undeceive him, for my name is known, and death hangs upon its sound. Ah, Kenau,—ah, dear God! It is a terrible thing to be torn between love of child and faithfulness to Heaven. The soldier had been sent to bid thee go to Count Egmont and warn him to flee, as fled the Prince of Orange. A day has been set for his fall. Thou wilt go to him?"

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"Ay, Joost. But I fear he will not believe me. He has made up his mind to trust to the King and his own past record."

"Father," said Wilhelmina, "may I not go with thee and visit Kenau? I think Jan would like to hear if she is well," and she gave her brother a sly look. Jan suddenly turned very red, but he looked straight before him.

"Come, my dear," said Joost heartily, "she pines away in her confinement. Come, and she will fly to thy arms."

Hendrik, Joost, and Wilhelmina left the house. Bilder and Hans passed into a back room, saying they must get ready their bundles, in order to make their escape at midnight. Belle-Isle heard their heavy tramp as they marched to an upstairs room where they had been given a temporary home. Jan led Belle-Isle to another upstairs apartment, where he placed at his disposal his father's best suit of clothes. As they were of about the same size, the Frenchman luxuriated in his fresh apparel. Upon his feet were comfortable cloth slippers, not tight enough to inconvenience the foot that had been bruised. With a sigh of regret at Wilhelmina's departure, and with another of content at his good fortune, the Frenchman sought the open window, where a balmy night-breeze played in the lattice.

"Jan," said Belle-Isle, "what a strange thing, that I, unknown to you all, sit here in a handsome suit of clothes, my future robbed of its cares, my past troubles forgotten! Can I ever repay all this kindness?"

## A MAIDEN OF HOLLAND

Jan turned and looked at him. Belle-Isle waited a reasonable time for a response, then continued: "It seems that good father Joost has a daughter."

Jan cleared his throat.

"And so she must be kept in a hidden place, because her father is, as they say in my country, a Huguenot? Poor maiden! Is she fair of face, Jan?"

Jan blinked his eyes.

"I have a thought, Jan. Why not follow Joost and thy father? If I read aright thy sister's glance, thou wouldst not be sorry to see Kenau, and by my soul, I feel as lonesome sitting here beside thee (with all respect), as if I were a fresh-caught fish, lying gasping upon the river bank."

Jan spoke: "To those who need our charity, my father always gives the best, and keeps the second best for himself, who is not in want."

"That, in truth, is a noble quality," said Belle-Isle, "but how it beareth upon this projected visit to Kenau, I know not, my friend."

"Why, look thou," said Jan with a sudden spirit. "If it be thy pleasure to talk, talk away. But do not expect me to skip from subject to subject as I were a midget! For I no sooner close upon and grasp one idea than thou thrustest a fresh one into my ear!"

"Then forget all I have said, good Jan, except the last, namely that we fare forth after Wilhel—I mean after thy most excellent father. Thou canst not think how it irks me to be wasting this fine suit of clothes upon thee. I never have a good coat to my back, but I



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long for a woman. Come, Jan, my foot is bruised, it is true, but every time it flinches, I will think of—Now, what sayest thou; shall it be a merry journey to Joost's home?"

At that moment the sound of running feet came to their ears. Belle-Isle started up, and Jan opened his mouth, whether in startled surprise or to speak could not be determined. The door was flung quickly open, and a form almost fell into the room. It was a woman, whose age and condition could only be surmised, as she wore a heavy veil. She recovered her equilibrium instantly, and, slamming the door, felt nervously for the bolt. She found it, and shot it into place, and stood with her back to the men, her little hands leaning against the door, in the attitude of one who listens in apprehension. Every motion was quick and nervous. When she looked at them over her shoulder, it was with a swift movement of the little head. Her dress was rich, her form superb in its elegance and grace. It was as much unlike the sturdy, generously moulded form of Wilhelmina as might be desired.

When she spoke, her voice was rich and musical. "Blessed Mary! They have lost me."

"Madam," said Belle-Isle, "tell me in what I can lend thee aid."

"Hush!" she whispered, bending her ear to the crevice of the door. By this time Jan was upon his feet, looking about him for some object. There came to them the sound of rushing feet. Iron smote upon stone.

"Try that door," said a voice in Spanish.

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“Nay, she came not hither,” said a second, “See how quiet lies the house.”

A third voice spoke. “But there is a light within!”

“A curse upon the dogs!” said the first. There came a rain of blows upon the door.

## *Chapter Three*

### *TO THE RESCUE*

**W**ITH a noiseless tread, and with the lithe grace of a panther, the woman crossed the room to the fireplace, where Belle-Isle and Jan stood. The door still quivered from the blows that had been delivered by the three Spanish soldiers. The little stranger came close to Belle-Isle, and clasping her hands, raised them toward him in supplication. He was both touched and mystified. She evidently feared that if she spoke, her voice might penetrate to the ears of her pursuers. Belle-Isle, although sure she was one of the two thousand women without shame who had been such an affront to the virtuous Wilhelmina, nevertheless felt for her an ardent sympathy. But wisdom told him he was no match in his crippled condition for the three soldiers; and even if he were, should he shed blood for the sake of a woman of the camp? No, the house belonged to Jan Janssen, — let Jan act in the matter. Belle-Isle was but a guest, — to oppose the Spaniards for the unstable favor of this fugitive would bring shame and danger upon the home of his benefactor. These thoughts occurred to

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the Frenchman even as the woman crossed to him and raised her clasped hands. He turned away his head.

In the meantime Jan, who was never troubled by a quick succession of ideas, had seized upon one thought and had been digesting it at his leisure. Having now got to the very pith and marrow of it, he walked softly toward the inner room, passed through the door, closed it behind him, and left Belle-Isle to his own devices. The Frenchman hurled a furious glance after the enormous back of the retreating Dutchman, then, turning about, discovered the woman in her former attitude of supplication.

A voice came from without: "Said I not the house was deserted? It is not long since I came hither with a message to the master, one Hendrik Janssen, calling him away. Be sure he is gone, for the order had a life hanging upon its fulfilment."

"And said I not that a light burns within?" cried another. "Hendrik Janssen, or whoever he may be, is one of these Dutch devils, else he would not be living here with his nose hanging over a vile canal. And will a Dutchman go away and leave his light burning for nothing?"

"It is true, by St. James!" said a third. "Hendrik may be gone, but is he the whole family? We will have that jade out of the heretical nest! Have we brought these females all the way from Castile as gifts to excommunicated Netherlanders?"

"Well spoke, comrade! An I get my hands on her,

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she will never turn heels to a Spanish warrior again, as Philip is my King?"

"Thy hands on her, indeed! Not so, Gonzalvo, not so. We will throw dice for the beauty. Now!" The door leaped in its fastenings as fierce blows echoed throughout the room.

The fugitive, her form quivering from head to foot, clasped her hands frantically about Belle-Isle's arm. "Save me," she whispered. "Oh, Holy Mary! I am undone!"

Belle-Isle bent his mouth to her ear that his voice might not reach the pursuers. "Why hast fled from them?" he whispered. "For what other reason camest thou into this land, but to be a cure for homesickness to thine own countrymen?"

She took her hands hastily away, and retreated a few steps. But need was imperative. She returned. "Thou art mistaken," she whispered. "I am not one of those outcasts. Save my honor an thou be a true knight."

"Do the ladies of Spain run the streets of Brussels at night?" he returned in a low voice. "Besides, did not the soldiers describe thy condition? No lady came with Alva's army; yet thou didst come with that army. Thou art, then, no lady."

"We must break in the door," said a voice. "See, Gonzalvo, is there no heavy beam lying hereabouts?"

"The door is heavy oak," said another. "By St. James! an we once get within, we will make them pay dearly for our pains. We will make them warning to



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all the natives in Netherland, to turn their eyes to their own wooden-sandalled, barrel-shaped damsels, nor dare to look at those we brought hither with our money and our pains. By St. James and the holy saints! shall we listen to their complaints and naggings and ten thousand demands all the way from San Ambrosio across the Alps, through Savoy to the Luxemburg frontier, and then have them, on the night of our arrival, fly to our enemies? — What fortune, Gonzalvo?"

"The street is as bare of heavy beams as my own eyes. There are two windows to the room, but they open upon the foul canal. The other side is a blank wall. The house is built as a fortress."

"Let us look, then, for a loose cobblestone."

"Ay, a noble thought! Now we shall soon run the rats out of their hole." Their feet were heard as they groped their way over the massive cobblestones.

In the meantime the fugitive had appealed again to the Frenchman. "I am not such a one as thou and they suppose. For very pity and for very manhood's sake, deliver me!"

"I know well enough what thou art," said Belle-Isle, "but perchance thou hast been driven to the life by wrongs or starvation. But I must pay heed to my own life at this moment. I must get out of this as I may, by Belle-Isle! Look to thyself, woman! I pity thee, but cannot endanger myself for such as thou."

"For such as I!" she repeated haughtily. She raised her hand in desperate haste, and tore away the veil. "Look upon me. Read what is written upon my

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face, and if there is a word blurred by shame or an evil life, thrust thy dagger into my bosom."

"As God lives!" cried Belle-Isle, starting back, "It is the old man's esquire!" It was, in truth, the one who, in male attire, had so engaged his attention and admiration; the one who had lifted a finger in warning, who had made the sign of the cross. And as that face had seemed too delicate and that form too dainty and symmetrical for a soldier, they now became the glory and the charm of the beautiful woman who fastened her eyes upon his face. "Read here," she repeated. "Am I what thou saidst?"

"What art thou?" he faltered. "And why--"

"I am that warrior's daughter whose musket I carried as his esquire."

"Come," said the Frenchman, "let us try the rear of the house. Surely we can crawl through any gap that let pass the burly shape of Jan Janssen." The maiden drew her thick veil over her face, and prepared to follow. Belle-Isle opened the inner door. He started back as a Spanish soldier sprang upon the threshold. At the same time a terrific blow came upon the door that led into the street.

"Hola, comrades!" shouted the Spaniard, "I have scaled the ramparts in the rear!"

"What!" cried a voice from without. "Is that thou, Don Antonio, already in the room?"

"Ay; and here she stands, clinging to some image which cannot be a man, for it carries no sword at its side."

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"Hasten, then, and unbar the door, Don Antonio."

"Not I," returned the victorious soldier, casting an evil leer at the fugitive, and drawing his sword. "Get in an ye can. I will cut a door in this fellow's heart to let out his life, and have the woman for my prize."

"Lady," said Belle-Isle in a low voice, "I fear we are both undone, for I am as bare of weapons as the day I was born. I would God thou hadst a musket or sword somewhere about thee."

"Here is my dagger," said the maiden, thrusting it into his hand. "Be good knight to me, sir, and God have mercy upon us both!" They stood in the corner of the room next the fireplace. The man who had invaded the apartment from the rear was a powerfully built soldier, dressed in gilded armor, and defended by a glittering sword which he held drawn, as he paused on the inner threshold.

"Now hearken unto me, boy," said the Spaniard, "for I perceive thou art no miserable worm of this doomed land, but a bird from another country. Give the maiden back her plaything, and run away, for I do not care to spill such innocent blood. Knowest thou this woman is not worth thy little finger? Yield thee and go free!"

The door shook under repeated blows. "An thou let us not in," shouted a voice from without, "it will be an ill day for thee, Antonio! She is as much ours as thine."

"Oh, no, comrades, indeed, no, dear friends! For I have her in my net and you are outside the door. Pray God the door may hold firm, and indeed I think it may,

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for it is well wrought, and oaken ! How now, boy, wilt live or die ? ”

“ That shall be as it may,” cried Belle-Isle, grasping the jewelled dagger. “ But if God allows thee to overcome me, I shall have my own opinion ! ”

“ Sacramento ! ” cried the Spaniard, rushing upon him with hissing blade.

“ Belle-Isle ! ” cried the Frenchman, springing aside, and making a futile attack with his short weapon.

“ Long live the Beggars ! ” came suddenly the hoarse shout of Bilder and Hans. The Holland Wolves sprang into the room from the rear. With a mighty leap Bilder Kopperzoon was upon the Spaniard before the latter had recovered from his surprise. The Hollander made a sweeping blow with his gigantic sword, and the head of Don Antonio rolled upon the floor, the body falling with a crash. The blows on the outer door became deafening. Hans had been holding back, his arms burdened with a roll of garments. He now came forward, and, falling upon his knees, began to clothe the dead soldier in a woman’s dress.

“ Alack ! ” shouted Bilder in stentorian tones, “ the Spaniard hath slain the poor female. Is this Spanish chivalry ! ”

“ What sayest thou ! ” roared a voice from without. “ Open this door, dog of a Dutchman ! ”

“ I will open it, good sirs,” cried Bilder. “ Only have patience. For my heart is as wax. Alack ! to see a maiden slain before my eyes and then the Spanish murderer escape.” Here Bilder motioned Belle-Isle

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and the fugitive into the inner room. They obeyed the signal.

"He is now dressed," said Hans, "but behold these great boots looking from under the petticoat!"

"Sit on them," counselled Bilder, "and be lamenting for the poor darling."

"But look at that head," whispered Hans in a rough guttural voice that refused to be softened. "They will never believe that head came off a damsel's shoulders."

"By St. Bavon!" cried Bilder impatiently. "Why did we ever attempt this thing? In peace there are a thousand things to think of, but in war, it is merely the cutting of throats. Let it be war, then!"

At this moment the outer door fell in with a crash, and a crowd of furious soldiers swarmed into the room. The original three had been joined by their comrades. At least a dozen men leaped over the fallen door, then paused with amazed eyes at the sight of Hans sitting upon the boots of the headless warrior whose gory armor was concealed by one of Wilhelmina's white dresses.

"Alack, fair gentles," cried Hans with a terrific roar of simulated grief, "behold my darling, slain by one of your comrades! He hath escaped, through the chimney vent."

"What sight is this?" said the leader of the soldiers, unable to fathom the meaning of the grotesque scene. "Who was it, Gonzalvo, who reached the room from the rear?"



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“My darling, my little lamb!” roared Hans, sticking close to the boots.

“It was Don Antonio. As for this dead woman, she was never the jade we were pursuing!”

“Now this is like Don Antonio’s carelessness!” cried the other, looking at his men gravely and shaking his grizzled locks. “See, he hath left his head under the table where stands the holy water!”

A quick glance on the part of the soldiers, — and from their throats burst a shout of fury.

## *Chapter Four*

### *FLIGHT WITH ROSAMUNDA*

**W**HEN Belle-Isle, obeying the gesture of Bilder Kopperzoon, hurried the fugitive into the room back of the front apartment, he found Jan waiting.

"Out of this window," said Jan, — a preposterous blurred shape in the gloom. A window stood open, looking upon the canal. Belle-Isle ran to the window, forgetting his bruised foot. The maiden kept beside him. A rope hung down into the darkness.

"What is at the end of this rope?" asked Belle-Isle.

Jan did not answer immediately. The furious cry of the soldiers came from the adjoining room. Belle-Isle felt the fugitive clutch his sleeve.

"Wilt adventure with me into the night?" he asked.

"Oh, hasten, — yes, yes!"

"I go first," said the Frenchman, dropping over the window-sill, his hands clutching the rope.

"A boat is at the end of it," said Jan.

Belle-Isle called from below. "Come, lady-esquire! Have no fear. I will receive thee."

"It is so dark," she said. Then there came the clash of sword blades from the front room, and the startling

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report of a musket. Jan threw open the door through which she had made her escape, and, with drawn sword, strode to the assistance of Bilder and Hans. The maiden with wild eyes stared upon the shifting scene, — a scene where the actors swayed back and forth, or leaped from side to side with curse and groan, while ever rose the clash of arms. mingled with the iron tramp of restless feet.

“Come!” cried Belle-Isle from beneath the window, “Lady-esquire! wilt throw away thy chance?”

But she, as if petrified with terror, stood staring, her hands clutching at her breast. She saw Hans holding three Spaniards at bay, as the Holland Wolf set his back to a corner, and slashed out with his long blade. One of the Spaniards fell. “Long live the Beggars!” shouted Hans, keeping the other two at bay with his bloody sword.

“Long live the Beggars!” echoed Bilder, but his voice did not come with its accustomed force. He was almost overcome, but the fugitive could not see him from her position by the window. Hans, conscious from the tone that his friend was at a disadvantage, but not daring to look his way, for he also was hard pressed, took new strength and a fiercer desperation from his fear.

“The Holland Wolves!” he cried, and, suddenly leaving the corner, pressed upon both foes at once, his blade flashing with such terrific speed and energy that it was able to keep each of the attacking blades from his bosom. “Down!” he cried, his eyes glowing like the red eyes

## FLIGHT WITH ROSAMUNDA

of a hyena who sees his prey about to fall. "A death! Long live the Beggars!"

This time Bilder did not echo the cry; he had no breath to spare. Where was Jan? The maiden could not see him. Hans now fought with only one, the most valiant of the three, but suddenly the Spaniard lost his sword, for the Hollander sent it whirring upward, where it drove its point into the ceiling. The Spaniard fled to his comrades. Hans instead of pursuing his defenceless foe, ran to the long table and caught up a candle. His voice rose above the fearful din. "Look, gentles, look!" he cried. He rushed toward the lower end of the table, put the candle beside the other, and with one breath extinguished all the light in the room.

The girl recovered with a start from the spell terror had cast upon her. She found the bottom of a boat. She crouched in the gloom while the Frenchman, without a word, rowed away. Lights occasionally twinkled faintly from either side of the canal, but for the most part they were in a heavy gloom, punctuated by brilliant stars. They could scarcely see the water within reach of their hands, for it was black from the refuse and dust of a great city.

When the home of the Janssens was lost from sight, Belle-Isle spoke: "Why didst thou keep me waiting in such danger both to thee and me? Look thou, lady-esquire, an thou go with me, thou must do my bidding, or I will do thine. Come, now, who shall be captain?"

"Señor, I could not come, for what I saw rooted me to the spot. But I will obey thee."

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"Call me Belle-Isle," he said; "it will lend a new value to my name. Thou mayest trust me through life. What are thy wishes?"

"Take me home, Belle-Isle, and thou shalt have a rich reward."

"Nay, I am enjoying my reward now, lady-esquire, for though I cannot see thy beauty, my memory is like a clock that hath stopped at a golden hour, — the moment thou didst lift thy veil and ask me to read thy face. And I read it so thoroughly that I can now recite it by heart without a candle for prompting."

"Thou hast promised so much," she said, "add this: that thou wilt not speak of love to me, for that were to rob the flower of thy benefaction of all save its thorn."

"It shall be no love, then," said the Frenchman. "Thou mightst have asked me an easier task. Where is thy home that I may take thee thither?"

"The house of a certain Madame de Jasse. Knowest thou the place? It is a large palace."

"Why, I know the place fully as well as any other in Brussels," said Belle-Isle calmly. "And when I tell thee I would not know Hendrik Janssen's house again if it were set before my nose, thou mayest take inventory of my knowledge of the city. In truth, I never saw this place till this day, when I was driven straight to Janssen's house, into the which I entered, and wherein I was so engaged in studying a picture there, I did not once poke head out of window."

"A picture? Art, then, an artist?"



## FLIGHT WITH ROSAMUNDA

“Nay, but a judge of art, which is better. For is it not better to pick flaws in pictures than to be a maker of pictures for other flaw-pickers? I should like to know if we are rowing in the right direction. We are at least leaving a safe distance between us and thy bloody friends, the Spaniards.” There was an uneasy pause, while the oars dipped regularly into the blackened tide.

On either side rose abrupt brick walls, pierced with windows high from the water, through which came the subdued glow of candles. When they came to a street that ran down to the canal, moving lights and the call of voices told them that the city was astir. Fear whispered that they were the cause of the activity, and the Frenchman redoubled his strokes.

“Lady-esquire,” he said suddenly, when grim silence surrounded them once more, “I cannot keep from my mind the thought that I am playing a fool’s part in a light play. I wish not to entertain this thought. I close the door of my mind against it, but it comes scratching against the panels. I cry to it, ‘Away, dog, away!’ but it whines and scratches worse than ever. What art thou but a Spaniard come to Brabant in man’s clothes, — likewise a beautiful woman wandering the streets of its capital at night with Spaniards at thy heels? By Belle-Isle, lady-esquire, I know not why I should run my neck into the halter for the sake of a woman brought along with Alva’s army! There be two thousand light-hearted damsels in his train, and thou art one, I fear, an it please thee.”

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“I swear to thee, Belle-Isle, upon the crucifix —”

“Do not swear to me,” he said. “What I want is not swearing, but talking to the point. Now, as for me, I have no fear for myself, nor care I for my future. Belle-Isle always comes out with a whole skin and a smile. It is nothing to me that I am a stranger in Brussels. But how I may go about with a woman in my boat, — never sure that her soul is as fair as her face, and neither one of us a married person, and both of us young —”

“Sir, I will tell thee who and what I am, and after that, if thou doubt me, set me ashore to fare as I may. Yet to tell thee my story is to throw me at thy mercy. For I must tell thee what is known to but one other in all the army, — I mean my father. And if my father learn that I have revealed the secret, I am ruined.”

“Fear me not, lady-esquire, I do not wish to learn thy story to tell to others, but to repeat to myself. Now I perceive here is some great matter, but thou mayest pour thy tale into my ears as if I were a deep well beyond the reach of any bucket an inquisitive hand may seek to lower into its depths. But here seems a likely place of retreat; the accursed Spaniards — by thy leave — may think of this canal, and ply up and down its length for a clew.”

“Thinkest thou there is this danger, sir?”

“I think so indeed, else were this adventure as tame as the beasts on the day the Garden of Eden was opened up to the public.”

## FLIGHT WITH ROSAMUNDA

"It is an outlet to the canal," said the maiden, straining her eyes.

"Say, rather, an inlet. Let us row up this branching path. By Belle-Isle! it goes directly under yonder gloomy building. No lights!" He turned the boat, and entered the narrow channel cautiously. "It is a strange taste that finds pleasure in a stream under one's house," he whispered. "But it is a lucky taste for us! For know, lady-esquire, that my bruised foot would rebel against much work. This water and this boat seem to have been put into juxtaposition for my especial benefit. Bend low, else this portal will do thee injury. How fortunate am I, to find this hiding-place, this boat, this canal, and a pretty maiden to tell me her secret! But this is my secret; I trust to God, fortune, and Belle-Isle, and trouble not my soul about the outcome."

"Methinks God alone might stead thee, Belle-Isle."

"But I be not worthy to throw myself altogether upon His protection," said the Frenchman. They had passed under a massive stone archway which came down close to the surface of the water. They were now in complete gloom. The air was heavy with the dampness and closeness of the inclosure.

"If we had a light," said Belle-Isle, "but it would be too great a risk. But we will adventure to talk together in low tones, maiden, and so pass the time."

"Not so, sir, for I fear there may be listeners in this strange house."

"In truth, lady-esquire, I would as lief have my head

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lifted off my shoulders as feel my tongue itching to rub against the gentle touch of speech, yet find it bound in dumb chains. Talk we shall, talk we must, else how may I endure this waiting? And how else mayest thou tell me thy story?"

"Canst thou in no wise excuse the telling?"

"In no wise. I know not what thou art, but I know Belle-Isle; and he hath a wish to live, and enjoy!"

"Alas sir, not long ago, didst not tell me to trust thee through life?"

"I know not how it is," he said, "but when I make a promise, no man could feel more sure of keeping the same. It must be that my fierce intention is so wondrous hot, it burns itself out by its own heat. Now tell me thy tale, and if all sounds fair, I am thy knight. Convince me, and I will in some wise get thee to thy abode. But otherwise I think we should part. For, as I said, we be unmarried folk, and young."

"Thou wilt not trust me, Belle-Isle, yet I must throw myself upon thy mercy!"

"That is different, maiden. We take men for granted, but women on proof."

"Then,—now, canst hear my voice?"

"I can, by coming nearer. Speak no louder, lest we be overheard. Let us set our heads closer together. Now."

"My name is Rosamunda."

"A sweet name, as far as it goes, Rosamunda."

"But let it go no farther, sir, for the rest is my father's secret."

## FLIGHT WITH ROSAMUNDA

"Let us have the whole matter, lady-esquire. In the sky of my faith must swim no crescent, but a full round moon."

"Thou art cruel to force me to buy thy favor at this price!"

"But I think," he answered jauntily, "thou hast no other market, so I may make the price as I please."

"Then, — my name is Rosamunda de Oviedo y Valdez."

"Surely this name is large enough for the dress of greatness! But I shall call thee Rosamunda. That is better than Señorita de Oviedo y Valdez; and Rose is better than Rosa; and sweetheart is better — I pray thee continue, Rosamunda."

"I trust to thy honor to speak no word of love; and so call me as thou mayest, for after this meeting there will be no second. My father is Gonzalvo de Oviedo y Valdez, one of the greatest grandees of Old Castile, the intimate friend of the Duke of Alva, and a favorite of the King. When Alva received orders to march hither with his army, my father sold all his lands and palaces, and turned his back upon his country to fight against the heretics."

"And why, lady? Is he so fond of war?"

"Belle-Isle, he is, before everything else in the world, a Catholic. Before love, honor, fidelity, paternal affection, is his religion. He thinks to do a great work here for Rome and God. His religion is a passion, and its expression is the scowl of hate and the thrust of the blade. He is a haughty Christian."



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"A bloody Christian truly! If Christ had possessed many such followers there would have been fewer unbelievers in the world. I cannot say if there would have been more believers."

"This land of sluices and dykes is cursed by infidelity," she said. "Heresy flouts itself in every street; the holy mass is ridiculed; indulgences are held of no worth. But the day is coming for the wrath of God and the glory of his church. Better a land blasted by war, with only vultures and ravens to disturb the silence, than men and women teaching the terrible falsehoods of the Reformers."

"What sayest thou, Rosamunda, to trying another subject? For I find this one difficult to digest. Why camest thou in man's attire?"

"When my father sold his possessions, he would have sent me to a Carmelite nunnery to take the veil. I could not endure such a fate. A life of devotion is not for me, Belle-Isle, I lack the courage."

"Thou art right, — courage is a good word. I was two years in a monastery, and I quailed before the cold water and hard crust, more than I ever quailed before the sword of an enemy. So thou wouldst not be a nun?"

"There was but one alternative, — turn soldier and come hither to slay Calvinists and Lutherans and miserable anabaptists, and the like rank growth of mortal weeds. I have no relation in all Spain. And my father, — thou canst not think how fierce a Christian he is, how steeled his heart! When I elected to come as his esquire, that was the first time he had smiled upon

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me for many a day. Thus only did I escape being a nun."

"I am right glad thou art no nun, fair Rosamunda, but I cannot think thou wilt ever make a good soldier. Sweet lady, hast the heart to plunge a sword into the bosom of any man?"

"Ay, indeed, if he be a rebellious heretic, an enemy of the Lord God and King Philip. When I put out the light of such a noxious curse to religion, the very saints will clap their hands, and the Blessed Son of Mary will for an instant cease to feel the agony of the nails in his hands and feet."

"But look thou, Rosamunda. When thou puttest forth thy sword and thrustest it into the breasts of these Netherlanders, knowest thou not that they will incontinently suffer a grievous pain?"

"They will suffer no pain equal to the pain they deserve! By their living, do they not spread horrible falsehoods? Evil rides upon their breath as black clouds are buoyed up by the wind."

"But reflect, Rosamunda. Thy sword will make many a wife a widow, and many a maid an orphan. What have they done to deserve thy cruel hate?"

"Now thou speakest as no true Catholic, Belle-Isle. Do not the women nourish in their hearts the rebellion of their husbands and the mischievous doctrines of their fathers? Do they not despise Rome and rebel against Spain?"

"What do I know about these women, Rosamunda? I am a Frenchman, but newly come hither."

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"I knew thou wert no true part of this stolid and benighted people. I distinguished thee from all the rest as I rode behind my father in the army. I saw thee sitting in the cart, ragged and wayworn, but with that in thy face too nimble for a Dutchman. I felt for thee, seeing thee in such dangerous company. So I held up my finger in warning. And that meant: 'Flee, join the Spaniards, or quit the land! For a terrible blow is about to fall upon this accursed people!'"

"Rosamunda! My blood turns cold when thou sayest such fearful words in so soft a whisper. What a small maiden, with so great a hate! But those with whom I consorted, I met them by chance, are Catholics born and bred."

"They call themselves so, Belle-Isle. They may even believe themselves true children of Rome and God. But they will not have our blessed Inquisition, till an army come hither to force it upon them. They are willing for Reformers to hold camp-meetings, and even have heretical churches within city walls. Now what kind of Catholics are these? Belle-Isle, art thou a Catholic?"

"What a question is this, Rosamunda! I pray thee, wherein have I given thee cause to doubt?"

"When I made the sign of the cross, why didst not follow suit?"

"I make my signs of the cross when and where I choose," said Belle-Isle, "with thy pardon. Now let us not talk of these things. Why didst roam the streets of Brussels at night when an Oviedo should be in her boudoir? We do not even know in what sort of a place

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we now rest. However, when thou hast told me all, I will make what shift I can to get thee home."

"Then hear it all, unkind Belle-Isle! I tired of man's attire in which I had been so long. I purchased a woman's dress, as it were for a gift to one of the maids. I donned this attire, veiled myself, and felt my heart leap up, as if it had thrown off heavy chains. I was a woman once more, and I had a mind to go out into the world and forget that I must be a soldier. Those Spanish damsels who came with us go when and where they please, with as much freedom and unconcern as if they were men. I thought I could do as they; but scarce had I left Madame de Jasse's when I found myself followed by three men. They mistook me for a mean creature, and made chase. I might have regained the house, but they were in the way, and one of them was—he was my father! The one they called Gonzalvo, who beat upon the door."

There was a pause, and then Belle-Isle remarked dryly, "Thy father is a merry gentleman!"

"Now," said Rosamunda very slowly, "I might as well be dead as have him learn I have broken my promise to keep in male attire. If he learn that I am the woman he pursued, he will believe I have often donned a woman's dress. When his suspicion is aroused, it never dies till it strikes its blow."

"I envy thy father his daughter," observed Belle-Isle, "but not thee thy father. I think, then, thou hast had a hard life, poor girl!"

"Yes, Belle-Isle, and that has made me hard. For

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there is as little mercy in my heart for these unfaithful heretics as there is in my father's bosom. If he is hard, so am I. Yet often I would relax in certain ways, and forget my mission in the world, and play in the sunshine of bright thoughts. But there is no one for my pleasure. I have had only my father. And his spirit, even in sleep, wears its armor with a sword at its side."

"I would I could be thy father for awhile," said the young man. "I would put laughter and love into that hard heart of thine, and chase out every shadow of hate and disdain. What art thou, to go through the world glooming at the earth that God makes smile into thine eyes?"

"The earth is fair, señor, — but the men who walk upon its surface! Nay, I have my mission in the world, a dark and terrible, but a noble mission: to sweep from God's fair world the curse of heresy. But now I have told thee my life. Redeem thy word and take me hence."

"I will save thee immediately, Rosamunda. Bow low in the boat and we will issue into the canal once more."

"But hark, Belle-Isle! What is that?"

Belle-Isle listened intently, then whispered, "What should it be but a boat coming up the canal? All I marvel at is that it did not come sooner."

"Dear saints of Heaven!" she moaned. "What, now, is my fate? Oh, why didst tarry so long?"

"In truth, maiden, I knew not where to go, or I would have gone willingly enough. Hush! They draw near."

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"They have stopped," whispered Rosamunda.

"Nay," said the Frenchman. The sound of oars was now heard at the opening of the inclosure.

"They may be in here," said a harsh voice.

"I would they were in —"

"Nay, comrade," interrupted the first speaker, "be not so uncharitable."

"I was only about to say Purgatory," returned the second speaker.

"Why, ay, then so do I wish them there, with all my heart!"

Belle-Isle seized Rosamunda's arm and whispered, while his lips touched her veil, "They are my friends."

"Let us light a match," said a third voice.

"Nay, good Jan, lest it be seen by our enemies. I will see with my ears." Then, raising his voice, the speaker called cautiously, "Be there any frog-eating Frenchman in this cavern with a damsel at his side in lieu of a sword?"

"The Frenchman and the damsel are here," answered Belle-Isle from his boat, "and it is very true there is no sword, Bilder Kopperzoon, else would there be no talk of frog-eating."

"We are well met," said the voice of Hans. "All five safe and sound, and ready to fall to blows."

"Talk not of blows," said the voice of Jan Janssen, as his boat drew alongside the other. "When our enemies have reinforced themselves, they will certainly come into this nest, since *we* could not pass it by. Quick and away, with no words!"



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"Good gentlemen," said Belle-Isle, "this lady is to the palace of a certain Madame de Jasse. If any of you can show us thither, I will load him with riches."

"Indeed?" said Hans. "And what riches dost thou bear in the pockets of another man's suit of clothes?"

"My riches be not in men's pockets," returned the other. "Nay, I will enrich our guide with the priceless gift of sincere gratitude. Friends, this damsel is a true lady, the daughter of a hidalgo; it was her misfortune, not her purpose, that set her at the head of a chase of love."

"That is another matter," said Hans. "For the honor of any maiden I would sink into an adventure up to my throat. But as for thy gratitude, keep it to warm thy bare back when thou art given thy proper rags, and Hendrik hath his jerkin again."

"Let who will, ride forth with me," said Jan, with a huge contempt for words.

"I am with thee," said Bilder. Hans climbed into the boat that held Belle-Isle and Rosamunda. Jan rowed away.

"Now the oars to me," said Hans. "I know this place as I know the part of my hair." They went forward a short distance, then the boat grated against some object. "Here we alight," said Hans. "Have no fear; it is a goodly stone landing that will not shake though so great a man as Belle-Isle hobble upon it. Steps lead up from this landing-place to a door that opens into the first story of a great palace. We will

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pass through this same palace, and gain the street, and fare forth to our Madame de Jasse."

"But is this palace empty, good Hans?"

"Empty? Is a palace an empty box to be cast upon the roadside and left for ants to crawl therein after crumbs ungarnered? Ach! I warrant it is full of servants, — guests, belike; for there is always merriment going forward in this palace."

"But indeed, Hans, no one must see this maiden. An her father hear of her, he will eat glass, and crush iron bolts between his fingers. And no more do I wish to be observed slipping through another man's palace."

"Fear not, — I know a safe passage. Besides, this is our only hope to gain the street. By this time the canal is watched by many eyes. It is this palace, — or an escape into some hidden nook, where there could be no outlet into the street."

"Rosamunda," said the Frenchman, "wouldst not rather lie safe in a hidden nook than venture into this merry palace?"

"As God lives, Belle-Isle, I must reach home before morning, or my father will learn all, and I am lost!"

"Come!" said Hans. "Up these steps with you, friends, and slip not. I will go before. It would now be as dangerous to return to the canal as to enter this palace."

"I fear only for Rosamunda," said Belle-Isle. "By my own good name, my heart is mightily lifted up by this knightly venture!"

## *Chapter Five*

### *THE DASH THROUGH THE PALACE*

**B**ELLE-ISLE, holding Rosamunda's hand, felt his way after Hans Poot up the wet stone stairs that led from the boat-landing. Presently he whispered, "There is one thing I do not understand, maiden. Thou seemest to be in no wise uneasy lest thy merry father may have fallen a victim in the fray. Yet it may be —"

"Nay," she answered, "I saw him make his escape. One of thy friends fought with three nobles; two fell. The other, my father, leaped away and gained the door, just as the lights were blown out. But dost thou think God sent him into this country to fall under the blade of a heretic?"

"As to God's intentions, I have my own opinions," said the other. "My opinions may not be so wise as another's, but I like them better because they are my own. Now, what a little hand is this I find in mine. I think four kisses would measure it from tip to wrist. Gentle lady, suffer me to measure it now."

Rosamunda snatched away her hand. "Thou wouldst never speak these words to me, were I in my father's palace," she said haughtily.

## DASH THROUGH THE PALACE

"Now what geese are these, cackling at my heels?" said Hans in a harsh whisper. "You come unto this place billing and cooing as if it were in your own dove-cote. A murrain on your tongues!"

Rosamunda slipped.

"Give me thy hand again," whispered Belle-Isle, bending over her, "and I will hold it as gingerly as it were the tail of a lizard. I cannot have thee falling upon thy adorable knees in this fashion, lest harm come to this sweet body."

"Speak not thus to the daughter of de Oviedo y Valdez!"

"Now this is more adventure than I reckoned for," muttered Hans to himself. "I would Bilder were here to tell me what to do with these prating fools. Methinks he would even bump their heads together and bring stars to their eyes even as the flame of speech runneth along their tongues!"

"Nay, Rosamunda, come, give me thy hand, and I will never say the image of thy exquisite features is stamped forever upon my heart."

"I have a mind," whispered Hans, grasping his shoulder, "to stamp a cuff upon thy ear. I am about to open the door. Beware!"

"Here is my hand," whispered Rosamunda. "It is a trust, Belle-Isle. Protect me."

Hans pushed open a door built in the floor of the palace. They came up through the opening, seeing nothing. Their feet left the stone stairs, and trod a wooden floor. Hans thrust into Belle-Isle's hand the

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end of a handkerchief. Holding the other end, the Hollander passed stealthily forward, thus without speech or sound guiding the others. There came to them the sound of music and dancing. Belle-Isle felt the hand of Rosamunda tremble with apprehension. Hans, who knew the way thoroughly, led them without pause till he reached a door. A faint light glimmered through its keyhole. Hans stood still, either to listen or to reflect. Every step had brought them nearer the sound of revelry, and now they could distinguish the air that directed the dancers.

Hans felt for Belle-Isle's arm, and drew the head of the Frenchman close to his lips. "Hist, stranger," he growled, in a vain attempt to whisper softly. "This passage is our only chance, and it is lighted up; I never found it so before. Would to Heaven Bilder were here to tell us what to do!"

Belle-Isle drew away, not in perplexity, but to get his over-sensitive ear away from the bristling whiskers of his wild guide. Hans dragged him closer again. "Cast thy vote. Shall we venture into the lighted passageway, or slip to some safe cellar for the night?"

"It shall rest with the maiden," answered Belle-Isle. He whispered the question to Rosamunda.

"I must reach home before daylight," she said. "Oh, I cannot, cannot think of retreat. For God's sake, Belle-Isle, in memory of the wounds of his Blessed Son, take me to the home of Madame de Jasse, though it be through fire! My father is a terrible man, and I am ruined if he discover the truth."

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"Stop her," growled Hans. "She will have all the roisterers here in a moment!"

"We will go forward," said Belle-Isle.

Without a word Hans opened the door and they entered a long narrow hallway whose walls were of massive stone. Lights hung along the way. There was no furniture in the apartment. It was the first time these three had been given an opportunity to see each other since the conflict in Hendrik Janssen's house. Hans, who went before, did not trouble himself to take advantage of this chance. The sound of laughter, music, and hearty voices, mingled with the rattle of dishes. A feast was in progress. Hans bent all his mind upon the thought of reaching the farther end of the hall before one of the side doors should be thrown open. Belle-Isle and Rosamunda walking behind him, no longer needing the handkerchief for a guide, had full time to observe the Holland Wolf. Belle-Isle, accustomed as he was to the wild appearance of Hans, was startled by this sudden lighting up of the barbarous picture. Towering high above them, with wide shoulders and long legs, yet not too long for that great body, Hans crept forward upon enormous bare feet. He held his sword drawn, and his ear tilted, thus giving them a glimpse of one red eye twinkling behind a forest of umbrageous whiskers.

Belle-Isle preserved his usual attitude of an erect back and a head tilted up as if to catch the light. One swift glance had shown him Hans in all his picturesque outlines. After that, the Frenchman's attention was devoted to the lady by his side. Conscious as he was of the fearful



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danger that surrounded them, he could not be disturbed, for he had a pretty woman to think about. She was defended from his gaze by that heavy veil which had disguised her from her father. But Belle-Isle remembered the perfection of her features, and his imagination looked straight through the veil and kissed her cheeks. There was no disguising the exquisite and aristocratic form and bearing, the feet that must have travelled many a league before they could have found their equal in all the Low Countries, and the delicate hands, each finger stronger than a dungeon to hold prisoner his heart. So as he walked beside her, Hendrik's slippers making no sound, he scarce limped once, for he had forgotten his wound. Filled as his mind was with pleasure in this moment, he could not be content. It was not enough to remember how she once looked. Nay, he must see her again. They were near one of the torches that threw its red glare from a sconce in the wall.

Suddenly he stepped in front of her, turned about, and with a wave of his hand that entreated permission, lifted her veil, and drew it back over the Persian shawl that covered her head. Then with a slight push upon her shoulder, he turned her about so the light could flood her face. She met his eyes without flinching, nor did she make any effort to replace the disguise.

He looked into a proud cold face, the features set in a haughty frame of deep reserve. Her brilliant black eyes shone upon him as if he were immeasurably beneath her in rank and interest. She noted his handsome face, and the pure white neck which had not been sunburned,



*“ With a wave of his hand that entreated permission ”*



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and which rose like a marble column from Hendrik's rude coat. But his beauty did not appear to move her to admiration. Upon her dark face — and her complexion was as dark as it was soft — there seemed to rest a calm scorn. Her eyes looked into his, but they were steady, clear, emotionless. Her lips wore that curl of superiority that was half disdain, which he had admired in the esquire of the Spanish army. She seemed to place him in a position of helpless inferiority, to set an immeasurable distance between them. The very hollows in her swarthy satin cheeks — those cheeks so mobile, so brown, so wonderfully shaped, the little hollows where, it seemed, Love must have kissed her as she slept — held him aloof. She was using his friendship now because she must. From this night they would be strangers because she would wish it so, because she held him and his simple friends beneath the value of her memory.

These thoughts came to him with the first long look into her face. In truth that look was not very long, measured in the coin of every-day time. But the heart has a time of its own, that drags or leaps with the pauses and the thrills of life. Hans, little dreaming they could be guilty of such folly as to linger beside the torch with the enemy's door just opposite, had crept on up the hall, and now paused at its farther door. He casually blinked his red eyes over his shoulder. No Frenchman; no Spanish maid. He turned about. There they stood before the torch, with her veil thrown over her bright head-dress, and Belle-Isle staring into her face. Hans glared with unspeakable fury, not daring to utter a

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sound. The door opposite the silent pair opened. A head was thrust into the hall.

Belle-Isle, while gazing intently into Rosamunda's face, became aware of another presence. He turned and saw the head looking through the partly-opened door. With swift fingers Rosamunda pulled down the veil over her face. The intruder held the door in such a way that it hid from him the wild form of Hans Poot. Hans stood rigid with surprise at this sudden entrance of one whom he could not see, but whose part in the drama could hardly be a friendly one. He felt not only surprise but impotent rage because the Frenchman had thrown away his chance of safety for a look into a woman's face.

The head was that of a Spanish soldier. It appeared to be a head that travelled as slowly through thought as it did through space. It remained motionless, the eyes fastened upon Belle-Isle and the maiden. Hans now did a thing he had never done before, but he was prompted by his anger: he deserted his comrades in danger. He slipped through the end-door which he had already opened, and drew it to after him, saying in his irate soul that the Frenchman had brought this trouble upon himself, and now let him get out of it as he might! In the meantime Belle-Isle had not been standing idle. At his first glance toward the unexpected apparition, he had formed his plan of action.

"I can save thee, Rosamunda," he whispered. "Promise thou wilt come to me when next I send for thee."



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"If I can," she answered.

"Nay, say thou wilt, on the crucifix," whispered the young man, whose heart had been strangely moved by the look of haughty superiority which he had read upon her face. "Say thou wilt come to me, or, by Belle-Isle, here is an end of our story!"

"Sir, for the love of the Blessed Mother of God —"

"Thou wilt come to me?"

A low voice spoke in the apartment adjoining them. It was addressed to the soldier who stood blinking in the doorway. "Why dost thou pause, fool? Lead on!"

"My God, Belle-Isle!" whispered Rosamunda, seizing his arm convulsively, "that was my father's voice!"

"And wilt come to me, when I send for thee?"

"I will come, as I hope for heaven!"

Belle-Isle turned to the soldier in the doorway. "Is the master ready for us?" he inquired politely.

"Why, — ay, he is ready," said a stern voice behind the speaker. The man in the doorway was pushed into the hall, and he was at once followed by Gonzalvo de Oviedo y Valdez.

"It is a mystery play, an it please your lordship," said Belle-Isle with a bow. "Shall we begin at once?"

"Cristoval," said Gonzalvo, winking his eyes as one who has been a long time in darkness. "By the bones of the saints, here is the woman who led us such a chase!"

"Is it so, my lord? Then a murrain upon her, for my good comrade Don Antonio was slain for her sake!"



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Gonzalvo closed the door behind him.

"Gentles, what be these wild words?" said Belle-Isle. "Know ye not we be sent for, to make entertainment in the palace? Know ye not I be in the guild of rhetoric known the world over as the White Columbine of Leyden? We wait till the master hath feasted, to recite choice poems to his company."

"Now whatever thou art," said Gonzalvo, drawing his sword, "thou hast sued death in helping this Spanish woman to escape."

"My lord," said Cristoval, "they are good words. Let us trust to them and not stop to lay a deed beside them. Thou hast no time, my lord, to trifle with women. Let us get hence, my lord. Here is a fearsome delay."

"I know no fear but the fear of being outdone. Draw, fellow, and let us see to whom is this jade."

"My dear lord, let us get hence. Thou hast two thousand women to pick from. Belike this is some shrewish, haggard wench, yellow and bewrinkled. And as for fighting this fool, is not the city full of accursed Dutch? Thy sword will not draw more blood from one than from another."

"In faith, my lord," said Belle-Isle, "I would gladly draw, had I a sword wherewith to pleasure thee. I have only a dagger, but I do not wear thy heavy armor. Come on, then, gallant sir; I can leap out of thy way, and cut thy throat all in time for good Cristoval, who seems in something of a hurry."

"Thus for a vile heretic!" cried Gonzalvo, rushing forward.

## DASH THROUGH THE PALACE

"Away!" cried Belle-Isle to Rosamunda. "Follow Hans!" As he spoke he stood ready for the onset.

Rosamunda fled up the hall.

Gonzalvo made a lunge at Belle-Isle. The Frenchman, who had crouched as in fear, but in reality for a definite purpose, gave an agile leap along the wall, and not only escaped the venomous thrust, but tore from the sconce the lighted torch. Wheeling about before the Spaniard could entirely recover from the impetus which carried his body forward, Belle-Isle rushed upon him with the torch in one hand and his dagger in the other. Rosamunda, who had almost gained the door, gave a wild scream of horror. Footsteps were heard running. Cristoval struck at Belle-Isle savagely with his sword. At the same time, Gonzalvo threw forward his blade to pierce the breast of his enemy. His sword was struck from his hand by the unwary stroke of Cristoval.

"Traitor!" cried Gonzalvo, glaring at his friend in a fury.

"Nay, good my lord," remonstrated the disconcerted warrior.

Belle-Isle flung the torch into Cristoval's face and raised his dagger over Gonzalvo's neck, as the latter stooped for his sword. The flame from the torch swept away Cristoval's eyelashes and eyebrows in a flash, burned a path through his beard and filled the air with an odor of burning hair.

"My lord," said Belle-Isle to Gonzalvo, "receive thy death wound."

"Belle-Isle!" cried Rosamunda.

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"True!" said the Frenchman, replacing his dagger in his breast, and running to Rosamunda. "Come, away!" The hall began to fill with men. "What is this?" cried different voices. "What is burning?" "Who goes there?" All was perplexity, astonishment. It was evident that the presence of the Spaniards in the palace had been as little suspected as that of Hans and his companions. Belle-Isle seized Rosamunda's hand and ran with her out of the hall. They were in darkness.

"Now will ye come?" demanded the voice of Hans fiercely. "This is your last chance," he added, barring the door that they might not be immediately pursued.

They followed him quickly through another door out into the street. The sound of blows upon the bolted door came to them. The street was deserted. "This way," said Hans surlily. "I would I belonged to the other party, that I might run you down for a pair of fools!"

"Now look thou, Hans Poot," said Belle-Isle, darting into an alley with Rosamunda as the Hollander led the way, "thou hast stood us in good stead, but by Belle-Isle, thou canst not think with what little joy I hear myself called ungentle words!"

"I would thou mightst choke of them," said Hans.

"Do we go toward Madame de Jasse's?" inquired Rosamunda breathlessly.

"Ay," said Hans crossly.

"What sayest thou, Hans," said Belle-Isle; "when the maid is safe at home, let us fight, thee and me."

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"A good thought," said the other, picking up more spirit. "Belle-Isle, thou art a good fellow, after all. Down this way to avoid pursuit. Then up yonder lighted thoroughfare, making as if it belonged to us. Canst swagger, Belle-Isle?"

"Yea, by St. Denis!"

"Then swagger! for there is no surer way of getting through the world. Thou art a good fellow, Belle-Isle."

"Thou knowest," said the Frenchman, "I could not suffer thee to call me a fool."

"Of a surety. There is no other way. Now, I promised Wilhelmina not to injure thee, but this is a forced thing; it could not be otherwise. I could not but call thee a fool, it was a thing so manifest to God and man; thou canst not but resent the epithet. We be near the nesting place, wench."

"Lady," said Belle-Isle, "remember the oath. The first time I send for thee, be it rain or shine, be it in war or in peace, to me thou comest."

"I will keep my oath, sir, and I must trust thee, as a true knight, not to abuse that forced oath."

They reached the palace. Rosamunda passed through the great arch without a word of farewell.

"Now!" said Hans, grasping the other's arm with savage glee. "Now, — ha! ha! Now for the duel!"

"Let us fight before the entrance," said the Frenchman. "Here is a smooth paving. Belike she will come out and look upon my body, an I fall. Get me a sword, good Hans." Suddenly Belle-Isle sank in a heap upon the stones.

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"What thing is this?" demanded Hans roughly.

"It is my rebellious foot," said Belle-Isle with sudden weakness. "As I live, Hans, I fear we must give over our sport. I have treated my foot with scant ceremony. Stay!" He rose painfully to his feet, stood a moment, staring at the door with a white face, then fell again.

"How can this thing be?" said Hans fretfully. "Thou camest hither without a groan."

"I forgot my misery," said Belle-Isle, "because a lovely maiden was upon my arm."

"Belle-Isle, art true? Canst not in very truth fight with me, an I lean thee against yonder wall?"

"By Belle-Isle, comrade, I am as water in a sieve!"

"Well, well, let us not linger. Gonzalvo will dance hither presently. Canst climb upon my back? I will take thee to Hendrik's retreat."

"My weight is great," said the other, putting his arms about the burly neck.

Hans laughed contemptuously. "A feather!" he said, rising. "May my conscience ne'er be straddled by a heavier burden!"

## *Chapter Six*

### *THE SUBTERRANEAN RETREAT.*

**H**ANS POOT bore Belle-Isle upon his back, encountering neither challenge nor inquiry. Several times he was compelled to set the young man upon the ground while he filled his great lungs, and stretched his arms. But these stops were at far intervals, for the Holland Wolf had wonderful powers of endurance. They were near the river now. The activity of the city was past, and lights were seldom to be seen. At last Hans left the Frenchman upon the steps of a church, telling him he would not have long to wait. When he was alone, Belle-Isle groaned from the pain of the bruise he had treated so mercilessly. He was in a low, flat part of the city, where the houses were small and mean, separated from each other by marshy commons.

Soon the sound of approaching feet smote upon his ear, and he discovered both Hans and Bilder.

"Thou art to make oath," said Bilder without ceremony, "thou art to swear by everything that is sacred to thee, Belle-Isle —"



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"Let him swear," interrupted Hans, "by all the pretty women that ever he did know; for nought else is so sacred to him."

"Women!" said Bilder, contemptuously. "Nay, let us have some blessed saint or other involved in this vow."

"Thou art always right, Bilder," said Hans. "Sound him as to what saint is dearest to his heart."

"I pray you, good men," said the Frenchman, "take me to some place where I may lie down, for my foot is a great agony, an agony that leaps from climax to climax."

"We will take thee, Frenchman, when thou hast sworn never to betray the place of retreat. This thou must swear by the most sacred object known to thy French, and consequently fickle, heart."

"I swear it," said Belle-Isle eagerly.

"Thou wouldst never have had this chance, were it not for Wilhelmina," said Bilder. "But she wishes thee to be brought among us. If Hans had not lugged thee hither and come to ask our advice, she could not have known of thy plight."

"He promised to fight me," said Hans, "and I wished to fatten him for the slaughter. I thought only of nourishing his foot till it become strong to hold him up before my sword."

"What! He will fight with thee?"

"Yea; else would I have carried him as I had been a horse? He is a good fellow. There is a spark in his heart."

## THE SUBTERRANEAN RETREAT

"Now this likes me well," said Bilder. "It may be he is no craven after all. What saint wilt swear by, Belle-Isle?"

"Let it be Saint Rosamunda, — I care not a pin for all the rest," said the Frenchman.

"What saint is that?" Bilder asked of Hans.

"I know not. Shall I go ask a priest?"

"I will add to my vow the name of Wilhelmina," said Belle-Isle quickly. "If she is not a saint, it is because she is still alive."

"Enough!" cried Bilder. "We will receive thee." He got the Frenchman upon his back and they went forward in the gloom of the moonless night. They came to a deserted hut. The door stood open. The boots of Bilder rang upon the board floor. Hans's bare feet made a sound as of soft echoes.

"No one seems to be at home," said Bilder.

Hans laughed.

Bilder slipped the Frenchman to the floor. "Shift for thyself, comrade," said Bilder. "Thou, at least, canst crawl. This way, — it is an opening in the floor. Tumble not head-downwards into the depths. Feelest the rope-ladder? Cling to it like leech to patient, or thou wilt come by a cold bath."

"Might we not have a light?" inquired Belle-Isle, as a cold damp air breathed into his face from below.

"Down with thee!" called Hans who had slipped down the rope-ladder, and now waited below. "I will receive thee as gently as thou wert a nursing babe, and my breast thy banqueting-hall."

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"I like not this horrible uncertainty," said the Frenchman.

"Methinks," observed Bilder, "this infant hath been weaned, good mother Hans. He doth not lift out his arms to thee."

Belle-Isle clutched the swaying ladder desperately and slipped down into the cellar. Hans caught his swinging form, and drew him gently to him. Belle-Isle's wounded foot struck against some hard object.

"Hast the babe?" called Bilder in a low voice.

"Yea, he hath fainted, thank God! so we may bestow him at our ease."

Bilder climbed through the trap-door, closed it behind him in a way that defied detection, and reached the side of his comrade. They stood upon a raft which rocked gently as the water rippled against the sides of the cellar. Hans struck a spark by means of flint and steel, lighted a brimstone match, and set a torch to blazing. The raft was only about three feet wide and perhaps six in length, formed of heavy squared timbers, spiked together by cross-beams. Belle-Isle lay unconscious upon the floor. At one end stood an iron rod upon which the pine knot blazed. Hans held a pole, and Bilder took up another which lay beside the Frenchman. Hans, by means of his pole, unhooked the rope ladder from its fastenings just under the trap-door. He rolled it up and placed it within a box fastened to the raft. Then he pushed off, and Bilder helped both to propel and steer the rude craft. They were in a cellar of ordinary size, which was entirely bare. The walls

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were of heavy stones. Above their heads was the oaken floor of the deserted cabin, crossed by massive timbers.

The men pushed straight toward the farther side of the apartment, the water reaching no higher than three feet up the poles. When they came to the rock wall, the torch shone upon a door which had been painted so artfully that it could scarcely be distinguished from the wall in which it stood. The irregularities of the stone surface had been skilfully reproduced upon the single massive board.

The raft scraped against the wall while Hans, with the upper end of his pole, rapped three times, then twice, then again three times. The door opened promptly. They were evidently expected. The doorway was little wider than the raft, and so low, Bilder was obliged to lift the iron rod with its torch from the socket and hold it in a horizontal position. The men crouched to pass out of the cellar. The door closed behind them. A man who had been standing in a niche of the wall stepped upon the raft, causing the water to ripple over that end. The torch showed a narrow pass-way with stone walls, in which an oar at the side of the raft could not be used. Hans pushed from his end.

The water did not deepen. There was no conversation till they came to the end of the passage. Here was a door similar to the one through which they had passed. It was opened in the same way by a man waiting for them on the other side. Passing through this doorway, they entered a wide expanse of black

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water. The man who had opened to them stood upon a raft similar to theirs. The man who had opened the first door stepped upon the raft of the second watchman. They remained at their post. Evidently it was their duty to admit those who had a right to the entrance.

Hans spoke to Bilder. "Shall we carry the Frenchman to Wilhelmina in this wise? His white face will cause her a sad fright."

"It is true," said Bilder, stopping the raft. "We must not alarm Wilhelmina."

"But we cannot wrap him up and carry him into the house," said Hans, "without making her think he is dead."

"What shall we do, then?" said Bilder. "Come, Hans, thou art the one for strategy. Give us a thought for a torch to light us out of this maze."

"It is well spoken of me," said Hans, patting his stomach in self-approval, "I am full of subtleties and wiles. Who but me would ever have thought of dressing up the dead Spaniard as a woman?"

"Who, indeed, comrade! And who but thee would have forgotten that his head lay grinning under the table?"

"Well, well, there are many things to think of in a stratagem, Bilder Kopperzoon. There is the main point to consider, and I have no mind for side issues."

"Give us, then, a main point on this swooning Frenchman."

"I have it, Bilder. Thrust his head under water, and

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thou wilt pull him thence as lively as a duck who hath shown last her tail."

"Marry, a noble idea, Hans Poot! Would God I had thy schemes as scabbards for my deeds!"

Norman Belle-Isle suddenly regained consciousness.

"Woof!" he spluttered. "Why am I so wet?"

"It is a trick of the water," said Hans, highly gratified.

"It is a trick of some vile Dutchman," said Belle-Isle sitting up. "What place is this? As God is just, I have reached my fear at last! Woe is me!"

"Nay, Frenchman, this is not hell," said Hans.

"True," said Belle-Isle, staring about in amazement. Then he regained his old manner: "This is not hell, for there is no smell of scorching from thy clothes. Why hast thou brought me into such a trap?"

The wild scene that met Belle-Isle's eyes almost justified his ungrateful words. Before him spread a sheet of black water. Half a dozen huts, built upon piles, threw from their windows a faint light across the tide. The torch at the end of the raft showed a ceiling of massive planks that stretched away into the gloom. At frequent intervals stood stone pillars, reaching from the surface of the little lake to the covering. Here and there were stone walls that had once formed sides of cellars. They had been left to strengthen the retreat. Some of the huts were built with one side against these old walls.

As Belle-Isle stared, he observed a raft similar to the one upon which he sat move from one of the huts. Its torch showed three women upon its unpro-



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tected surface. They glided smoothly to another hut, their red torch throwing dancing lights over the tide. They disembarked at the door, and vanished within. There was no sound of welcome. Listen as intently as he might, Belle-Isle could hear only the pole of Hans as it sank into the shallow water, and the heavy breathing of Bilder.

The raft moved forward, and stopped before a hut. The floor of the raft was on a level with the threshold. Hans rapped once upon the door. It opened, and the rotund form of Jan Janssen was presented to their view.

"Here he is," said Bilder ungraciously. "It is Wilhelmina's doing, Jan. If ruin comes of this, blame not the Wolves."

"Ay," echoed Hans, "blame not the Holland Wolves!"

Jan made no reply.

"Hold a light," said Bilder, "that I may see to carry my fish out of the boat. The hook of fate hath galled him sore, and he be sick in the gills."

Jan opened his mouth to speak, but thought better of so rash an intention. He stepped aside, and allowed the light to stream out upon the raft. Bilder lifted up Belle-Isle, while the raft rocked unsteadily, and, bending his shaggy head, carried him into the room.

## *Chapter Seven*

### *THE HOLLAND WOLVES' FAREWELL*

**T**HERE were eight persons in the room when Hans entered, closing the door behind him. It was a small apartment, furnished with a few chairs, and a great chest in the corner upon which were stacked rolls of bedding. Jan lifted down one of these rolls, which proved to be a narrow pallet. He spread this upon the floor, and Bilder placed the Frenchman gently upon the lowly bed. Belle-Isle was confused by so many watching eyes, he was suffering acutely from his foot, and he was unhappy because he must be separated — perhaps forever — from Rosamunda. The imperious beauty of the haughty Spaniard had touched him keenly, and her memory stood between him and all else, making the scene about him appear commonplace. He lay with lips tightly compressed lest a groan escape them.

There was the confused murmur of voices in the room. Hendrik Janssen was conversing with old Joost van Boendale on religious matters. Bilder and Hans were talking to two ladies: one, the daughter of Joost; the other, her aunt. They were telling how Belle-Isle had

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escaped with the Spaniard, and how he had been carried hither. Jan Janssen, as usual, was silent. Occasionally he glanced furtively toward Kenau, Joost's daughter, but he had not the courage to venture to her side.

Wilhelmina had come forward as soon as Belle-Isle had been placed upon the pallet. Now she knelt upon the floor beside him. "Poor boy!" she said gently laying her hand upon his cheek. "Now, what hast thou done? Where is the bandage I put upon thy foot?"

Belle-Isle did not open his eyes. He moaned. He thought to himself, "Rosamunda!"

"Foolish boy!" she said, "to come hither in such a state. Was not our home good enough for thee?"

He opened his eyes. "But, Wilhelmina—" he closed his eyes again; she looked so big and strong! "But I could not stay. Were not the soldiers thirsty for my blood? Wouldst have a corpse of me, damsel?"

"Nay. But what was that Spanish jade to thee, Belle-Isle? When she ran into the house, why didst not turn her out again, unto her own people?"

"Thou knowest not the road thy words have taken," he said sharply. "She is as pure as any woman. She is a marvel of chastity and a wonder of virtue. Would I see her thrown to those dogs?"

"How knowest thou, Belle-Isle, that she is such a marvel and such a wonder?" inquired Wilhelmina, as she drew off his slipper and began to bathe his foot in a concoction she had prepared before his coming. "Is it because she told thee so, or because she is beautiful?"

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Foolish boy!" she exclaimed with the maternal tone against which he had previously rebelled, "knowest what thou hast done? Thou hast lost our home to us, for we may never venture thither again lest we be seized and dragged to the Inquisition; and all because thou, our guest, didst hold the door closed between the soldiers and that which they had brought with them from Spain. She belonged to them. Well I remember thy delight in those brazen wretches this morning! I know she is a 'marvel' and a 'wonder' because she has black eyes!"

"Wilhelmina, leave my foot alone. Let me die!"

Wilhelmina laughed.

Belle-Isle opened his eyes. "Maiden, is it true that I have lost thy home to thee?"

"Ay, true, indeed. Who else would have sheltered that being without shame? Would Jan have helped her to escape? Would the Wolves have fought on her account?"

"By Our Lady," cried Hans, overhearing the words, "not we! What was that lady to us but just one more person in the world? But we could not see Belle-Isle slaughtered like a sheep. However, Wilhelmina, that lady was not as thou thinkest. She is a virtuous damsel."

"And how makest that out?" demanded Wilhelmina scornfully.

Hans scratched his head. "Why, Belle-Isle told me so," he faltered.

Wilhelmina laughed loudly.

Belle-Isle drew away his foot with an angry motion.

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"I will not have thee dressing my foot!" he exclaimed.  
"Such hands are not for such work."

"Oh, yes they are," said the girl, holding them up.  
"See how large and strong they are! If there were no work in the world, how could such hands as mine make their excuse?" She continued to dress the bruised foot.

"Hendrik," called Belle-Isle, "thy daughter tells me my adventure hath lost thee thy home. But I swear to thee by Belle-Isle that the Spanish maiden I rescued is as fair and spotless as thine own daughter."

"If that is the case," said Hendrik, "we will say no more about my home. For what is a house in comparison with such a jewel?" He beamed upon his daughter.

"I cannot protect myself," she said, "if all the world compares me to that woman!"

"I can protect thee," said Bilder, drawing his sword.  
"What is amiss? Show me a man to fight with. Show me a man!"

"Show me a man!" echoed Hans, grasping his weapon.

"I will show you a man," cried Belle-Isle, "an I ever recover of this wound!"

"Now the saints grant a speedy recovery!" prayed Bilder fervently.

"Friends!" spoke old Joost. "What is this? A brawl in my home? Nay, nay, the peace and love of God home with us, and strife must stay without the door. Put up your swords, children; would fight each other,

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when all swords are turned against you? For shame, Bilder, for shame, Hans!"

The Wolves hung their heads.

"Do not make them grieve, father," said Kenau, "for remember this is their farewell visit, and all honors are theirs. I enjoyed their swords flashing so valiantly. I know if a man had been found, he would have wished himself a woman in a twinkling!"

Belle-Isle glanced covertly at the speaker, to see what manner of woman this Kenau might be. He was pleased by what he discovered. She was very tall, it was true; tall past the allotted height of women, and she was slender. Belle-Isle regarded her. Yes, she was certainly spare. And so tall! — why had she not stopped half a foot sooner? He was sorry. He regretted that she lacked a certain roundness and plumpness. But her face was pretty, her eyes bright and sparkling, and her lips so used to sprightly conversation that they naturally held themselves in an attitude for a smile. Belle-Isle looked at Wilhelmina, — too large. He looked at Kenau, — too thin. He thought of Rosamunda, — ah, heaven!

"I am sorry if I have spoken sternly, children," said old Joost, looking upon the Wolves doubtfully.

"Thou speak sternly, father Boendale?" cried Bilder, throwing an arm about the white-haired man.

Hans rushed up to the other side, and placed his arm about the Protestant.

Joost raised his hands, and laid one on either shaggy head. "Now the Lord bless these, my dear children,"



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he said, lifting up his eyes, "and grant they may never strike a blow save for their unhappy country."

"Not even for Wilhelmina?" asked Bilder doubtfully.

"Not even against yonder Frenchman?" gasped Hans.

"Let me read to you from the Blessed Word," said the old man, "and ye shall hear how Jesus bade his disciple put up his sword."

"Oh, no, father Boendale," said Bilder, "we dare not listen to that book; it is forbidden. They do tell me that the more Bible the less Catholic, God pity us!"

"I have been reading it to Hendrik," said Joost with a tender smile, "and he is none the worse."

"Hendrik is a fearsome bold man," said Bilder. "I am not afraid to fight with men, father Boendale, but I must take care of my soul; it is all I have left, now."

"Ay," said Hans, "we dare not throw off guard, and be at ease with that excommunicated book."

"But Hans, it is not excommunicated. Does not all religion rest upon it as a foundation?"

"It may be, father, but who am I, to dig down under the foundation? Nay, let us praise God in the house that stands upon the foundation. Dear father, tempt us not. We must diet our souls. The fatter the soul in this world, the better it will fry in the next."

"It is a good thought," said Bilder approvingly. "And that suggests to my mind that a proper way of bidding us Godspeed would be to spread a feast."

Kenau's aunt rose at these words.

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Belle-Isle turned his eyes to Wilhelmina. "What does it mean? Do the Wolves leave us?"

"Alas! yes, Belle-Isle. They must back to Holland. It may be we shall never see them again, so we make them what cheer we may."

"It is not long since they ate nigh to bursting," complained the Frenchman. "Will they dine again?"

"Thou shalt see," said Wilhelmina, showing her teeth. A wave of sickness passed over the Frenchman. He groaned. Jan and Hendrik had removed the bedding from the top of the chest, and Kenau's aunt was investigating its depths.

"Have ye anything in mind?" she asked.

"Hast onions a-plenty?" inquired Bilder timidly.

"Yea, a-plenty."

"Let us have onions, then," chirped Hans. "And if there be a cold ham, for God's love set it forth."

Wilhelmina, who had finished her work, now sat upon a corner of Belle-Isle's pallet, for there were only four chairs in the house. "We cannot cook in this retreat," she explained. "A fire is never lighted save that of a torch. But it grows not cold in here, even in winter."

"Yea, I have a good ham, a comfortable ham," said Kenau's aunt with a smile, "a ham worthy of Jan van Boendale himself. Thou hast heard that name?" she added, looking toward Belle-Isle.

"Have I?" Belle-Isle whispered to Wilhelmina.

"Thou hadst better," she whispered.

"Ay," said Belle-Isle boldly, "ay, have I!"

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Kenau went into the next room and returned with an empty box. "Let me help," said Jan, coming to her clumsily. Kenau flashed a smile into his face that petrified him. "Bring the boards, then," she said. The box was placed near the chest, and boards were stretched from one to the other for a table. The ham, two large onions, and a loaf of brown bread, were set upon the boards; also curiously shaped stoups of hard cider. Hans and Bilder sank upon their knees opposite each other, their eyes ogling the viands.

"Shall I ever forget our parting?" cried Hans; "Hither with that ham, Bilder, thou dear man!"

"Here is the knife, Hans, the saints bless thee! But we would enjoy this twice as well, if twice as many sat at meat. Come, Hendrik, Joost, Kenau, Jan —"

They shook their heads.

"Now, Wilhelmina," pleaded Bilder.

Wilhelmina rose. "Is there an onion for me, Hans?"

"Thou shalt have half of mine, Wilhelmina, although I shall have only enough left to sweeten my breath."

"I will give a third of mine," said Bilder, after a moment of inward struggle.

"But that leaves me with less than anybody," said Hans. "Now this thing shall not be!"

"Get others from the chest," said Vrouw van Boendale.

"We may not do that without lifting these boards," replied Hans, "and if we do that, we must stop eating. Blessed Mother Mary! Bilder, hast tasted thy onion?"

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I complain no more. Wilhelmina thou shalt have a third of the half that remains to me."

Bilder fastened his teeth into his onion, and his eyes began to water. "As God reigns!" he exclaimed, "hand me the cider ere I go up with an explosion; for there is a raging fire within and a river rushing out of my eyes. "Ach!" He drank and smacked his lips.

"Jan," said Belle-Isle in a low voice, "I beseech thee set thy broad back between me and yonder orgy. I am very weak, and my stomach rises to be free."

Jan solemnly lowered himself before Belle-Isle, and blotted out the room from the feverish eyes. But it proved of no avail. For upon Bilder's suddenly setting down his onion with great emphasis upon the upper end of the board, it slid and bounded down the slanting table. Hans grasped after it, but only succeeded in giving it a wild stroke which sent it flying into Belle-Isle's bosom.

"Faugh!" cried Belle-Isle, hurling the despised vegetable far from him. "Jan, how is it that the outside world never discovers this retreat?"

"Well," said Jan,—he paused and cleared his throat.

"You make no fires, so the smoke cannot betray you," continued the Frenchman. "There is little noise,—no one could hear you from the streets above. But I should think any man in Brussels might smell you out!"

"Who hath my onion?" cried Bilder.

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"Here, good Bilder," said Hans eagerly, "take of mine."

"Nay, Hans," said Wilhelmina, "I will divide with Bilder."

"Nay, nay," said Bilder kindly, "I will not rob thee. It would take a whole ham to smother down such an onion."

Kenau rose, brought her chair beside Jan as he squatted before Norman Belle-Isle, and seated herself.

"Jan," she said, looking down upon him with a mischievous smile, "is it not thy desire to fare forth with the Holland Wolves to Holland, and achieve somewhat for thy country?"

Jan moved uneasily.

"Thou art so big!" she said, "there is no man in Brussels of such size, I warrant me! Doth it not irk thee to have all this magnitude running to waste? How many pounds have we here of muscle, bone, and sinew that might be at the command of the Prince of Orange? Thou art no good here, Jan. If I were a man, Jan, I would accompany Bilder and Hans this very night, sword at my side, for the freedom of the Netherlands."

"Kenau," said Jan slowly, "now God be thanked, thou art no man, for there be men a-plenty on this round earth of ours, but of Kenaus only one."

"Yes, and one too many," she said. "Of what use am I, Jan, but to be a drag upon the arm of love?"

"I know not how many pounds there be here of muscle, blood, and sinew," said Jan. "But I would willingly cut off my arm if that would reduce me to the

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size of thy favor, Kenau. Is my size a stumbling-block to thee? Say the word, and I will never taste bite of food again, till I have waned to a thinness notable to behold."

"It is not so much thy magnitude, Jan, as the small spirit that methinks must feel lost in so great a shell. Hast no spirit to fight for our country?"

"Thou sayest I am no good here," said Jan, whose mind could not keep pace with the changes of his interlocutor. "Thou art wrong. Thy father will one day in his fanaticism or zeal give himself into the power of the Inquisitors. Already he debates between love of thee and love of God. Perhaps the pounds of muscle and sinew in my body will weigh in thy favor on that day, Kenau."

"Jan, what dost thou say? Such a thing shall never be. Fear not, my father will protect me. I do not need thee, Jan. Have I not other friends?"

"Then thou sayest, 'Of what use art thou?' " pursued Jan. "Kenau, of great use. Dost thou not awaken in me the glory of love? Without thee, would not life be a cold reality to Jan Janssen? What thou art to others I may guess. What thou art to me I cannot tell, for I never belonged to any of the guilds, and therefore cannot fashion poetry. My love cannot be told in prose, Kenau; it must either leap and dance in joyous sweet music, or be still and meditate."

"Say not these things to me, Jan," said Kenau, with a toss of her head that showed no displeasure, but rather the caprice of a coquette. "Thou art bold to



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speak to me again of such a matter, when I have refused thy suit a dozen times. Have I not told thee of that handsome tall man, so slender, that I did espy one summer's afternoon in Rotterdam, for whom I have ever since felt a most wonderful something that may be love, for all I know? His name I know not, but I am sure it was not Jan. Never have I seen him since. How doth he stick in my memory, unless some strange fantasy hath glued him upon its tablet? How can I know but this is love, in truth? Tell me, Jan, of the signs!"

"I know well thou hast other friends," said Jan quietly, "and that thou lovest me not. I have grown used to that thought, and it troubles me no more. Happiness cannot be bright without throwing a shadow. It is enough that I may love thee, and watch over thee, and see thy smile from day to day. It is enough to know that, when the end comes, I shall be a protection to thee, Kenau. Think of the flowers we have passed in our lives without plucking! They belonged to others, but ours was the delight in their beauty. So do I delight in thee, Kenau, a maiden I may never call my own. The bitterness of that love is all buried; I have moved forward, out of its shadow. I am in its light."

Kenau drooped her head a moment, then looked down and met the upturned eyes of Jan. There were tears in her eyes. "Thou simple Jan!" she said. "Jan, thou art a good man; I am afraid I cause thee much sorrow!"

"As for that handsome tall man, so slender," said Jan —

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Kenau jumped up and ran to her father, who sat with the Bible upon his knee, expounding a text to Hendrik. "Father," she cried, "Jan says thou wilt one day give thyself up to the Inquisitors. He has been trying to frighten me!"

Joost van Boendale rose, greatly agitated. He held the Bible in his hand as he looked into Kenau's face. "I shall never give myself up," he said.

"There, there!" cried Kenau, flashing a triumphant look at her lover. "I am angry with thee, Jan; thou art a cruel man to seek to move me with such words!"

"But," said Joost, "it may be I shall fall into their hands, my daughter. Kenau, I cannot stay hidden longer in this retreat. The harvest is ready, but where are God's laborers? Scattered, — imprisoned, — slain. My countrymen wait for the truth, as a country in darkness awaits the sun. I must go forth and preach the word."

"Father!" cried Kenau in a voice of terror. "Oh, father, that means the same thing that Jan said. How canst thou preach without being apprehended?"

"Doubtless the fate will overtake me, my child. But in the meantime, I shall have sown the seed of truth."

Kenau put both arms about his neck. "Father," she said, looking up into his face with an expression of wild pleading, "tell me thou hast not decided upon this fatal course. Oh, my father, my dear one in all the world! wilt thou leave me alone?"

"Kenau, be brave, daughter. I have talked of this to thy aunt, but I feared thee, Kenau. Remember the parable. God hath given me a talent. Shall I keep it

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hidden in the depths of the earth? Or shall I go forth and let my light shine while God sends the fuel of faith, hope, and charity?"

"Father Boendale," cried Bilder, rising from his supper, "let Hans and me carry thy light upon the blades of our swords, and do thou abide with the lamb!"

"Hear Bilder, father, hear what he says?" said Kenau, beginning to sob. "He and Hans will fight for our liberty; here are two strong men in the place of thy frail body."

"Ay, ay," said Hans. "We will kill a many Spaniard for thee. This will be putting out thy talent to usury, good father Boendale."

"Nay, children, the sword hath never yet made God one true friend. Better one living disciple of the Lord God than a thousand dead enemies of the Cross!"

"What wilt thou do, Joost?" demanded Hendrik.

"Even as I have done unto thee this night, my friend. I will carry the Bible to such as will listen. I will explain the unsearchable riches of Christ. I will show the true way that leadeth to everlasting life."

Kenau sobbed upon his bosom.

"My dear friend," said Hendrik, "I am a staunch Catholic, and I only hear thee that I may think of a way to answer thine arguments. But others will pretend to be persuaded, then secretly go and give thee up. Remember the Regent's first decree, but two months upon the walls: that all ministers are to be hanged, as well as those who listen unto them. Our blessed King was dis-

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pleased with such a mild decree, and hath he not sent Alva hither to change hanging to burning?"

"I am well informed," spoke up Bilder, "that since the first of this year, there be scarce a town so small in the Netherlands that hath not seen a hundred men hanged up like common felons, because, to use the words of Peter Titelman, that Master Inquisitor, 'They are addicted to reading the Scriptures.' Bethink thee, good father Boendale, it will bring little comfort to thy daughter to have thy neck stretched in this fashion."

"Oh, Wilhelmina," wailed Kenau, "speak to him, for he hath often heard thy voice, and he will not heed his only child."

Wilhelmina was silent.

"Come, child," said Hendrik, "hang not thy head, but bid Joost remember his natural ties."

"I pray thee spare me," she said.

"Nay, nay," cried Bilder, "speak thy mind, and I have a sword to drive it down any man's throat."

"Ay," echoed Hans, "and I have a better."

"It is not so," said Bilder. "Better, thou rascal? Thy sword better than mine? How now, Hans, saidst 'Better'?"

Jan rose from the pallet and calmly took the swords away from the Holland Wolves, while they stared at him good-humoredly. "If we have more talk of which sword is better," said Jan calmly, "I will snap both blades and throw them out into the water."

"With submission, Jan," said Bilder, grinning.

"But what says Wilhelmina?" demanded Joost.

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"I say, father Boendale," said the maiden slowly, "that if I believed as thou, I should seek to show other men their error. If I believed I knew the only road to safety, would I not call to those astray?"

"But his daughter!" said Hendrik sharply.

"His daughter, yes," said Wilhelmina. "But she is only a maiden, such as I. Shall we weigh against the scores he thinks to rescue from destruction?"

"Wilhelmina!" cried Hendrik sharply. "Now what art thou?"

"In truth a strong Catholic, father. Fear not for me. I only know, were I no Catholic, I should seek to win others to my own faith, even as I have often tried to persuade Kenau to become a daughter of Rome and God. For her heresy I pity her with all my heart, but I love her just as if we were going to heaven arm-in-arm."

"What Wilhelmina says is true," observed Vrouw van Boendale, with a sad smile. "She speaks from unprejudiced mind, worthy the admiration of old Jan Boendale, my illustrious ancestor. My brother thinks he has the Word of God, and he dares not hide such a treasure from his countrymen. I, also, believe he is walking in truth. He were unworthy the name of Boendale, should he not lift his voice to those wandering among delusions."

"But he is my father!" cried Kenau, clinging closer. "He could never endure the torture and the flames."

"My daughter," said the old man, "it may be I shall escape that fate. I shall not needlessly expose myself to detection."

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"No, no, no!" cried the maiden, "they will hunt thee out as they hunted Maas and Bergen and Maerlant and Beukelzoon and Rhijnvis Klaasden and all the rest,—all who oppose the terrible and irresistible Church of Rome. And I shall lose my father!"

"If it must be, Kenau, shall I forsake God to serve my child? I am weak and frail, and the rack is strong. But sometimes in the frailest bodies dwells the strongest faith. By myself I could endure little; but he who fights for the Lord never fights alone."

"Joost, Joost!" cried Norman Belle-Isle, rising upon his pallet while his eyes glowed with enthusiasm, "stand firm like a true soldier! I am with thee. When my foot is well, I will fare forth with thee, and be thy right hand in spreading the Gospel. Long live liberty! Long live the Truth!"

They turned upon the Frenchman in amazement. Questions burst from the lips of Bilder, Hans, and Hendrik, in the same instant.

"Yes, I am a Huguenot," cried Belle-Isle, waving his arm above his head. "Behold a man who no longer cowers and crawls in the shadow of Rome!"

"Here is a sudden convert, father Boendale," said Bilder, scornfully.

"No such thing!" cried Belle-Isle, still waving his arm. "My parents were Huguenots and met the death of Huguenots, as did my aunt. I was brought up among those lovers of the true faith. There is not a Catholic drop in my blood!"

"I bless thee, my son," cried Joost with a tender smile.



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"Do not bless him too soon," said Bilder. "Here is some secret matter! This is a spy sent to worm himself into our secrets!"

"For shame, Bilder," cried Wilhelmina.

"Nevertheless," exclaimed Hans, "it may be true. How cunningly he hid from us his heretical views!"

"And said he not he came to us straight from a monastery?" inquired Hendrik, doubtfully.

"And when we spoke of the reformers, he uttered no word!" persisted Bilder. "When Joost came to thy house, Hendrik, why did not this fellow speak up and say, 'I, too, am a reformer?' But he said never a word as to whether he was a Calvinist, Lutheran, Anabaptist, or belonged to any other anathematized and wholly excommunicated sect of damnable heresy, — begging thy pardon, father Boendale."

Jan Janssen, who had all this time been working himself up to the heat of speech, now achieved his desire. "Let us hear more from Belle-Isle. Let him clear or condemn himself."

Belle-Isle, who had notably recovered from his fine enthusiasm, nevertheless met their eyes without flinching. "Then hear me," he said emphatically, "for I will speak without reserve. My father was burned at the stake for the crime of preaching the Word of God. That was before my birth. Shortly after I was born, my mother was dragged from her bed and strangled, and her body burned, because she had converted one of the Queen's maids of honor. My aunt adopted me, and I lived with her until I was ten, when all her house-

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hold were seized and hurried to the gallows. A good man, a Huguenot, took me and I lived with him until my sixteenth year, working in his shop."

"Here is a mixing of matter," cried Bilder. "Formerly when this Frenchman told his tale, he said his father, his mother, and his aunt died. But now he says all three were slain, not that they died."

"Ay, ay," said Hans, "which shall we believe?"

"When I have slain thee," said Belle-Isle, looking at Hans, "wilt thou not be dead?"

"No, by the Holy Mother, no!" cried Hans. "Now I would I knew that the only death I have to fear lurks in thine arm, Frenchman!"

Belle-Isle smiled at him genially, which caused Hans to scowl and tap the floor fretfully with his heels.

"After that, friends, my master fled to England, and I was left to shift for myself. So I lived in many places,—it was a happy life. So I came here."

"But the monastery?" inquired Hendrik.

"Ah," said Belle-Isle slowly. "Now I would rather pass by the monastery. But there was a maiden in Paris, and her name—let it be what pleased her father, since he gave it her. And this lady took it into her poor mind,—I know not why,—she said she would become my wife. Look you, it was her fancy, her thought. Now I have never yet desired to become a married man. So her father said it would be well for me to pleasure his daughter. After I had been in the monastery a weary time —"

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"Thou hast not reached this monastery yet," said Wilhelmina, sharply.

"Ah? But the father was a powerful nobleman. So I left Paris at night without adieus; I would not pain mademoiselle by a parting scene. I disguised myself and so came unto Germany and entered a monastery. They thought me a Catholic."

"But how could they think thee a Catholic?" demanded Joost.

"I would inquire further into the affair with mademoiselle," observed Bilder, scowling, "if no ladies were present."

"By Belle-Isle, your thoughts do you wrong, and they wrong me as well!" cried the Frenchman hotly. "Now, as God lives, you shall know the whole matter! This lady was a lovely creature, with the daintiest little head and the snowiest neck in all Paris, but she pleased me not, I know not why. Good reasons may neither cause love to go nor come. Reasons are not the faggots that make the flame of love. So I could not endure mademoiselle, though she pursued me gallantly. I held her at bay. Now, as to why she loved me, I can understand that very well. There was a dance, and that night as I stood with my arm about her, and her head nestling upon my shoulder—for a gentleman could do no less,—in comes Monsieur her father. There was a scene. It was like a play. I said, 'But good! I marry mademoiselle at her good pleasure!' Then I departed from my native land. I became to inquiring eyes a Catholic. How could the world know? Did I not

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make the sign of the cross as skilfully as another? In the monastery, did I not crunch my dry crust and bathe my poor body in icy water, and sleep upon the bare ground, and thus escape the vigilance of mademoiselle's powerful father? So I came hither. I did not proclaim my faith. Are not three martyrs in my family enough? I thought to be something else."

"Yet thou believest?" asked Joost sadly; "and yet thou canst deny the Son of God to the world by thy daily life? Belle-Isle, why didst thou speak up just now and proclaim the truth?"

"Father Boendale, the fire of thy words set to blazing all the good stuff that is within me. For a moment I felt I could die the death for the Cause."

"Alas, poor youth!" sighed the old man. "And already thou seekest to creep back into thy dark concealment!"

"Alas!" said Belle-Isle, drooping his head, "life is sweet, and I have such a sweet tooth! It often comes to me that God will be content with my father, mother, and aunt. I think God sometimes looks into my soul, and shakes his head with a smile of tender pity, and says, 'I must not try this soul too far!'"

"Friends," said Bilder, "it is time for Hans and me to fare forth. Give us our swords, Jan, and thy blessing with them. The women must sleep, for it is very late, and this Frenchman fills my soul with discomfort. If any of you understand him, ye have shrewd minds!"

"Ay, we say farewell," said Hans, receiving his sword. "Long will it be ere ye see again the Holland Wolves.

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But think not, Wilhelmina, we shall fail thee. When the year is up, the one of us that is alive will come for thee. Thou shalt never pass to thy grave without the comfort of a husband. I would Jan were going with us. And, Frenchman, look to it! If thou prove traitor, the Inquisition has no torture so terrible as the one I shall invent; for I be a man of subtlety and of cunning devisings, as Bilder knows."

"Ay, ay," said Bilder admiringly, "Hans can think of wondrous shrewd plans and snares!"

Jan spoke. "I cannot go with you, though I am certain the Prince of Orange has not left our country forever. He will come again with an army, and you shall fight under his banners. But I have a duty nearer home."

"True, true," said Bilder. "Good Jan, keep thine eyes upon that reformer with his Catholic shell."

"Kneel down, my children," said old Joost, "if ye will receive my blessing."

They knelt, but looked uneasy. "Be careful what thou sayest, father Boendale," said Bilder; "do not make bold with holy matters that are for the priests."

"Ay, good father," echoed Hans, "let it be something about our country and its liberties, something earthly, lest the Blessed Virgin be offended with us."

"Poor children!" said Joost. "If I may not ask God to bless you, of what avail will be my blessing?"

"Bid Wilhelmina kiss us good-bye," suggested Bilder, "that would suit me better than a hundred orthodox blessings."

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"That will I," cried Wilhelmina promptly, and she saluted them upon their cheeks with a hearty smack that filled them with ecstasy. They arose from their knees.

"Kenau, good damsel," cried Hans, "run and fetch us sticking-plaster that we may cover the spot her lips touched, lest the air blow away the charm."

And so they went forth, a black patch upon the cheek of each, followed by the orthodox and the heretical prayers of their friends. The bedding was now spread upon the floor, and Vrouw van Boendale, and Wilhelmina passed into the next room. Kenau lingered at the door.

"Father!" she said, looking at him through tears.

"Kenau, thou who used to be so brave! Kenau, I will pray for thee."

"Father," she said, "do not decide until to-morrow. Let me pass one more night, thinking thou art to live many happy years with me."

He took her in his arms, and kissed her tenderly, but made no answer. When she had gone, Joost slipped to the outer door, raised his hand in benediction, and silently embarked upon the raft that stood ready. Jan looked at Belle-Isle and held up his finger in warning. Belle-Isle nodded. Then Hendrik blew out the candle, and they composed themselves to sleep.



## *Chapter Eight*

### *BELLE-ISLE'S DREAM OF ROSAMUNDA*

**T**HAT night Belle-Isle dreamt of Rosamunda. When Hendrik arose and lighted the candle, saying it was day (such knowledge comes after many years of early rising), the Frenchman still found his ears ringing with a Spanish voice. When the pallets had been rolled up and placed in a corner, Hendrik rapped upon the inner door. Vrouw van Boendale appeared, and cast a swift glance about the room. Jan nodded solemnly: Joost was gone. She hastily retreated to break the news to Kenau. Wilhelmina entered the room, closing the door softly behind her. The men heard a moan from the adjoining apartment. They pretended to take no notice, but Jan trembled and could not hide his concern.

"How is our patient?" Wilhelmina asked of Belle-Isle. The Frenchman seemed to see her as through a great distance. "I shall soon be well," he said. "A few days, and I can walk away from your hospitality."

Wilhelmina went to the chest of provisions, saying, "Art thou eager to walk away from us, monsieur?"

"It is not that I desire to leave such kind friends," said the Frenchman, "but," he added in an inward

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voice of his own dreamy consciousness, "that I would set my feet toward Rosamunda." But no one heard that inward voice. Wilhelmina, however, perhaps suspected it. She turned and looked at him over her shoulder with serious, questioning eyes. He had already ceased to follow her with his glance. He was with his night's dream. Wilhelmina drew food from the chest, and passed it about upon wooden dishes. There were ham and brown bread, both of which were strongly impregnated with an onion flavor. Belle-Isle ate little, though he found the cider refreshing. Wilhelmina was hungry. Belle-Isle closed his eyes that he might not see her eat. Her teeth were so bright and strong. He wondered how he might arrange a meeting with Rosamunda.

The breakfast passed in silence. Jan, at his gayest moments, would rather have been bored by another's conversation than offer speech of his own. But now he was sad, for he knew Kenau was weeping, and there was only a wall between him and her sorrow. Though she found his devotion a matter for jest, still she was Kenau, and that very laughter was a part of her. Before they had finished, Vrouw van Boendale returned. She said nothing about Kenau, although Jan looked at her eagerly.

"Hendrik," said the lady, "hast thou thy plan formed for the future?"

"Ay, lady. We must back to our old home in Zutphen. Our usefulness in Brabant is over, seeing that Count Egmont is doomed, though he will not

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believe it, and will not flee. But even were he safe, I could serve him no longer in this city. My home is now being watched; Jan and I are as much under ban as the Holland Wolves. We must make our way to Holland."

"Alas, Hendrik!" cried Belle-Isle, "that I, thy guest, should lose thee thy home!"

"Be not troubled, Belle-Isle," said the other kindly. "Thou didst not mean harm. Besides, the house was but rented, and I am too shrewd a Hollander to keep my money in my house. All I shall lose will be my furniture and keepsakes. I should have been compelled to flee hadst thou not come, for if Egmont fall, all his friends fall with him."

"Only say, Belle-Isle," cried Wilhelmina, "that thou art sorry for rescuing that jade, and I will forgive thee freely." She watched his face.

"I am not sorry," said Belle-Isle, "for she is a lady as pure as snow floating in air before its fall. I am sorry I brought this trouble upon good Hendrik, but as for the lady I cannot regret that I was her rescuer; would God I might see her this moment!"

"He is right," said Hendrik. "Woman's virtue is the foundation of society. Since this woman is as Belle-Isle says, I cannot chide him for hurrying my departure."

"Belle-Isle is very bold when he defends his lady," said Wilhelmina, with a look of open and lofty scorn that touched the Frenchman to the quick. "If he were as bold for his religion, we should not have taken him

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for a Catholic. He can defend this night lady with an eloquent tongue; but he has no voice for his faith and his God. Now if I were his lady—in which case I must be a marvel of loveliness—I should lack nothing for a champion. But if I were his religion, I should weep for an advocate.”

“My daughter,” cried Hendrik, “I know not what hath come over thee. This is two days in succession I have chidden thee. Such manner of speech is not for the daughter of my gentle wife. Wilhelmina, it is my delight to see in thee that absent one whom thou art very like, in face and form and smile. But when thou speakest thus and lookest so amazing proud, as if thou wert of a high station in life, then, by Our Lady! Wilhelmina, the likeness is lost, and I look upon a strange picture. I no longer see my beloved wife, nor my comforting daughter, but some haughty wench of nobility!”

Having cast this terrible shaft, Hendrik made for the outer door, stepped upon the raft, and slammed the door behind him. He pushed away into the darkness, lest his daughter come to him and rob his rebuke of its effect. Wilhelmina did indeed go to the door, but when she opened it, he was disappearing. She seated herself upon the chest and buried her face in her hands.

Jan watched her a moment with gaping mouth, then slowly rose to his feet.

“Do not grieve, Wilhelmina,” said Belle-Isle, “I did not care for thy words, though they were as unkind as

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a north wind in January. I would have told Hendrik I took no offence, but he ran as if every word he had dropped were a spark to set the house afire!"

Wilhelmina paid no heed to Belle-Isle. There was but one who could comfort her. Jan strode forward, then paused uneasily. A head appeared in the window; it was Hendrik.

"Jan Janssen!" said his father sternly, "I looked for this. It is ever thus, when I would train my child. What art thou about, Jan?"

Jan blushed guiltily, looked at his father, then at his sister. Wilhelmina shook with suppressed sobs. She was deeply hurt. Never before had her father accused her of being unlike her mother, — that mother who was more a tradition than a memory. It had pleased her to think that she had kept alive in Hendrik's breast the thought of his wife; that her smile was to him as the smiles of two, and that when she spoke he heard two voices. Yet he had just declared her face a strange picture. She broke forth into loud lament. At that Jan openly rebelled against parental authority, and took Wilhelmina in his arms. She sobbed aloud, and Jan's tears ran down his cheeks at the sound of her grief. Hendrik stared a moment upon the pathetic scene, then came through the window so quickly that he fell upon the floor. He sprang up with remarkable agility and rushed toward them with extended arms, his voice lifted up in remorseful sorrow. Vrouw van Boendale skilfully interposed her person between the group and the eyes of the Frenchman: "We are in such cramped

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quarters," she said with dignity, "that thou art necessarily brought very close to our private home-scenes."

"I see nothing but thee," said Belle-Isle, with a gallant bow to the old lady, whose face, under its snowy hair seemed to have caught the far-away glow of rosy childhood. "Thou and I are alone in the room, madam."

At this moment Wilhelmina's voice rose. "And thou saidst I am a strange picture, father! thou saidst I do not remind thee of my mother!"

"Ay," mumbled Jan, "they were thy words, father."

"I am a heartless wretch!" cried Hendrik in despair. "Thou art the picture of my love, Wilhelmina, for when I enfold thee, it is as if, in some wise, I had back thy dear mother from Paradise."

Vrouw van Boendale looked steadily at Belle-Isle, and held her shoulders more erect. "We do not hear them," she said.

"Not we," said Belle-Isle. "And so Joost van Boendale hath gone forth to preach the gospel!" He stopped suddenly, remembering his own lack of heroism. He blushed.

The lady magnanimously pretended not to notice his confusion. "We have not always lived in so mean a place," she said. "When we lived in the world, the rest of the world knew it! We had a great mansion in Antwerp; we were rich. My brother-in-law was a powerful merchant. My own husband belonged to the Violet Guild of Rhetoric,—he was a great poet. He is dead now. It will be five years in May. We had



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a ceaseless flow of masques and plays. We were very worldly. We were so gay! We did not care for religion then." She sighed. "Now, we do not care for the pleasures of this world," she continued. "All that is vanity. But I tell thee these things so thou wilt not think we were from birth accustomed to a hut of two rooms."

"No one could think so who knew thee," replied Belle-Isle with a bow. "Poverty brings out the brightness of the spirit. Without the clouds we should not have the rainbow."

"It is a great comfort to me," said the lady, with a stately inclination of her head, "that no loss can take from me my illustrious ancestor. My life is passed between these narrow walls. The black water surrounds our hut," she continued with a certain enthusiasm, "but I have my illustrious ancestor! Thou knowest what comfort he must give me, thou who hast heard of him, and therefore canst understand the light his glory casts upon me and mine. Jan van Boendale,—it is a talisman!"

"Ah, yes," said Belle-Isle, cautiously; "it is a talisman, indeed!"

"He hath been dead these three hundred years, but he gives me strength to endure our present surroundings. What matter how low our fortunes may descend, as long as we have that illustrious ancestor? It is as if, in plunging into the depths of poverty and sorrow, we carried with us a ladder upon which the mind may ascend to light and joy."

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"That is a brave thought," said Belle-Isle. "Now I would I had such a ladder! But though I have had as many ancestors as another, they sped their way through love and laughter, tears and time, without' carving a single name upon a stone. They are gone, those ancestors of mine,—gone, as I shall go. Sometimes it makes my heart ache to think how much happiness has been in the world!"

Wilhelmina now approached Belle-Isle. "We are a reunited family," she said with a sweet smile, though the tears still glistened. "And I am to make friends with thee for the cruel words I spoke. Wilt ride with me upon the raft?"

Jan placed a pallet in the midst of the raft, and helped Belle-Isle to his position. Wilhelmina took her stand at one end seized the long pole in her powerful hands, and pushed off from the hut. For some time there was no conversation between them. The young man was awed by the gloomy scene and dispirited by the clammy atmosphere. A pine torch spluttered in the end of the raft, opposite the rower. Belle-Isle sat with his back to the light, facing the standing figure of the girl. How strong she was, how unconscious of her motions! Norman Belle-Isle, gazing intently, thought her the antithesis of all his ideals. Her skirt was short, according to the national costume, revealing ankles such as he had never seen in France except among the stolid peasantry. And yet this girl was not stolid,—she was no peasant. She planted her feet well apart as she drove the pole against the bottom of the lake, she

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stiffened and bent her knees as if she had been a man. She did not even seem aware that his eyes were upon her. She was not conscious of herself. It was this that made her strange to Belle-Isle. Without this charm,—for her innocent forgetfulness of her form and gestures had the elemental charm of a child,—he would scarcely have found her worthy his attention, so much was she unlike his dreams of beauty.

“Wilhelmina,” he said at last, “what sort of a place is this dark lake of thine?” He turned his eyes from her face, which the uncertain light of the torch refined, and looked over the solemn tide. The huts upon their piles stood gloomy and without sign of life, save for the dim candle-glow that blurred the windows with a dreamy light. Here and there a light moved cautiously, carrying some one upon a friendly visit or some dangerous expedition into the outside world.

Wilhelmina paused in her work, and waved her arm. “All this extent,” she said, “was once confined and divided by cellar walls. A colony of reformers dwelt above. When Valenciennes fell and the wrath of our Regent was proclaimed against all heretics, these reformers deserted their homes and were thought to have fled the country. Their houses were rifled, burned, razed to the ground. Then the outcasts crept back to the cellars of what had been their homes. They made openings in the walls, that they might meet each other, for they are fond of congregating and singing hymns, poor bodies; and they love to go through a curious observance which they call the Lord’s Supper. So in

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this way the walls were torn down, and the cellars were thrown together, and this large cave was formed. But the river is not far away, and its waters are sucked in. Then they built huts as thou seest, set upon piles. There is only one way to enter, the way thou camest."

"But how came thy father, a Catholic, to know of this retreat?"

"Other Catholics know. The reformers have many friends among the children of the Church. Not friends in regard to their faith — which is accursed — but in respect to their love of liberty and country."

"It is not so in my country," said Belle-Isle. "Put a leopard and a panther in the same cage, and they will eat together as readily as a French priest and a Huguenot!"

"That is different," said the girl, pushing the raft slowly forward. "You have a king in your country and all are his children and may quarrel among each other. But our king never comes here. He lives in a foreign land, speaks a foreign tongue, and thinks Spanish thoughts. He sends people here to rule us, so we are bound together by a common interest to protect ourselves. These governors tell evil lies concerning us, and King Philip is angry and thinks us rebels. If he knew the truth he would spare us, for he is a good Catholic. But he thinks everybody here inclines to heresy, and therefore he dislikes all the Netherlanders, true and false. If it were not so, how could he hate Count Egmont, who has slain his own people to please King and Regent?"

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"Wilhelmina," said Belle-Isle suddenly, "if I desired to get out of this uncanny blackness and dampness, would the guards at the door let me pass?"

"Freely. And thou mightst return as freely by giving the proper raps upon the doors."

"Now that is a thing I cannot understand," said the young man. "Might I not go forth and betray all of you?"

"I answered for thee, Belle-Isle; I had read thee through and through, and there was no treachery in thy heart. To bring a stranger hither is always a danger, but dangers lay their heads upon our pillows and eat from our plates. When we cease to trust, let us die!"

"Well," said Belle-Isle lightly, "there is no danger from me. And now tell me another thing. That illustrious ancestor of Vrouw van Boendale?"

"He was a great writer. He lived long ago, but his book is thought to be the best, in these parts, that ever was written. Its name is 'Brabantsche Yeesten,' and it is thought a mighty fine thing to be kin to a man who could write a book three hundred years before we come to read it."

Norman Belle-Isle remained more than a week in the retreat of the reformers. His foot slowly healed, and in the meantime he grew into intimate friendship with all of the little hut. None of this group was like any companion of his former years; in each he found wanting the vivacity that drew his heart toward beloved France. He grew to admire the taciturn Jan, and to take a secret amusement from his slow gropings after ideas. He

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covertly watched the little scenes that took place between this huge lover and Kenau van Boendale. He decided that Kenau almost loved the imperturbable Jan, though she had resolved that no one should suspect it. She seemed to find pleasure in playing with the possibility. She grew used to the thought of her father's dangerous mission of preaching the Gospel, and though her usual attitude was one of gravity, with Jan she could instantly become sparkling, tantalizing. Belle-Isle had hoped that upon further acquaintance she would not appear so tall. But as the days passed Kenau did not decrease one inch in height nor add a pound to her weight.

He heard a good deal about Jan van Boendale, and that illustrious ancestor wearied him as much as he comforted Kenau's aunt. It proved that this old lady had originally been a Van Boendale, and that she had married (this was Belle-Isle's suspicion) not from love but from family pride, resolved to die with the name to which a glorious destiny had given her birth. She often spoke of the gayeties she had enjoyed before entering into the sweeter, if less sprightly, joys of religion. To the Frenchman, whose own religious experiences were lightly borne, her references to that former worldly life appeared tinged with a gentle, almost saintly, regret.

In the meantime Hendrik made cautious preparations for flight into Holland.

Occasionally Joost van Boendale visited his family, bringing news of the outside world. He reported great success in his labors: "There was one in particular, a



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Spaniard, who had been led to see the errors of the Roman religion, and who fairly hungered for the Truth."

"Beware of this Spaniard," was all Hendrik said, when his old friend spoke with kindled eyes of the foreigner's change of heart. Joost cast a smile of tender pity upon Hendrik. "Nay, my friend," he cried, "this Spaniard already desires to come and live with us and share our perils and our privations." Joost looked triumphantly about him and nodded his head several times.

More than all, Belle-Isle studied Wilhelmina. There seemed to be no depths in her nature, no hidden delights to flash forth at unexpected moments. Yet all her qualities grew upon him. Before everything else was her open frankness, a perfect outspoken sincerity that did not foster romance. Next he placed her utter lack of sentimentality. If he bordered upon the sweet umbrageous meadows of love, she brought him out into the open glare of a common-world sun, and laughed at his foolish words. Not that he felt for her the least dawning of passion, but he liked to play at sentiment for the pleasure of the game. In the third place, she was never really pretty. No color of dress or shading of the light would bring it about. Always cheery, always pleasant, with a smile that was always winning, still she was not quite, under any circumstances, just what she should have been. It was a pity. And she was so large! Belle-Isle could have been a friend to this maiden, if he could have been a friend to any of her sex. Not hav-

## BELLE-ISLE'S DREAM

ing the gift of being a woman's friend, he was discontented with her, even while she pleased.

But Rosamunda? Ah, there was the real centre of his thoughts. Day and night, his mind went forth to her. His fancy reproduced that glorious look of scorn, — how sweet to be scorned by one so beautiful! It was a disdain which he felt might be overcome by gallant acts and imperious desire. He could meet her with as haughty a soul, and he would conquer her. Oh, what a thought! To conquer that pride, and hold that slight form in his arms, — that form so dainty, so rounded, nowhere too much, nowhere too little, — to flash his eyes into her splendid black orbs, to lay his hand upon the dark, dark cheek. Every day Belle-Isle felt more keenly that Rosamunda must become his wife.

When his foot was healed, the Frenchman had formed a plan whereby he thought to meet once more the lady of his night's adventure. He learned from Joost that great festivities were going forward at the home of Count Egmont. That brave nobleman, blind to the signs of the times, had thrown his palace open to the Spaniards, as representatives of his King. Night after night passed in gay festivities, as if Egmont would go dancing to his ruin. It was impossible for his lofty mind to conceive of the low malice of Philip, — Philip who hated him as much for his popularity and glory as for his having protested against the horrors of the Inquisition.

On Thursday night, Joost told them, there was to be a great masked fête at Egmont's palace. The cream of Brussels society would be there, including the very

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few who were glad to welcome Alva, and the many who feared to stay away. The choicest of the Spanish army would be present. One thousand guests were invited. There had been gigantic preparations in the way of feasting, dancing, plays. All were to come masked save the officers of the first rank. The masks would not be removed until the guests were seated at the tables; until that moment, each was required to preserve, if possible, the secret of his identity.

Belle-Isle did not hear of this entertainment until the very day. He instantly resolved to be present at the masquerade, where he would surely meet Rosamunda. Joost van Boendale had come home to spend the night; his plan was to go forth just before dawn. All the evening Kenau hovered about him, his hand in hers. Hendrik, who had been gone two days, had entered before Joost. It was his intention to go forth with Joost in the morning, to be gone several days. Jan was happy because Kenau had her father safe. Vrouw van Boendale was cheerful over the coincidence of Joost being there just at the time when all happened to be present; she did not once draw upon her illustrious ancestor for comfort.

Belle-Isle watched them, feeling that he had no part in their simple joys. He belonged to another world. His foot was now well, and he must go forth and follow the path chance might direct. The more he looked at Wilhelmina, the more he thought of Rosamunda. But if he should tell them of his intention to venture to the masked fête, they could not understand.

## BELLE-ISLE'S DREAM

He could not leave such kind friends without farewells. The next night he would return and bid all good-bye. They need never know that he had been to Count Egmont's. He would see Rosamunda, if possible, — that possibility was worth any risk, — and the next day he would lie hidden. Then he would come home at night, and thank them for their hospitality, and so, — out into the world, once more, a wanderer. Only — he would be accompanied by the thought of Rosamunda.

Twice Wilhelmina asked Belle-Isle why he sat so still. He could scarce smile in reply. Once Kenau, who during his stay had given him little attention, declared that he had the look of a conspirator. Belle-Isle could not tell them that he was longing for the evening to pass. Even Jan noticed his preoccupation, and inquired if his foot pained him. It seemed that they could not leave him alone. He even had a guilty look as he evaded their friendly questions.

Night came, and all slept, — all but Belle-Isle. He shuddered at the terrific snores that ascended from the pallets about him. Jan, Hendrik, even dear old Joost, maintained a regular accompaniment to the music of their dreams. The young man arose, made hasty preparations, and felt his way to the door. The raft was ready. His departure was undiscovered. The men who guarded the outer doors of the retreat allowed him to pass without question. The light of his torch showed him the rope ladder in the raft box. He fastened it to the rings in the ceiling by means of the long pole, and,

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climbing up, opened the door in the floor of the deserted cabin. He found himself breathing the air of another world. He gave a little shudder as he realized how damp and close and unhealthy had been the air of the retreat. And he gave another shudder—one of delightful anticipation—as he breathed in the tingle of adventure that seemed to ride the September breeze.

## *Chapter Nine*

### *THE DUEL WITH ROSAMUNDA*

**A**S Belle-Isle left the marshy portion of the city it was still early. The shops were open, the streets alive with people. Torches flashed, and the rattle of soldiers' armor smote sharply upon the air. The natives were for the most part silent; but from the Spaniards and the German mercenaries broke snatches of song, and sudden guffaws, and calls to comrades. The foreigners were making themselves very much at home.

Belle-Isle mingled with the stream of noisy passers-by, and entered at last the Great Square in the centre of the city. Here many street lights threw a glare upon embroidered façades and bewildering gables. The Frenchman's heart bounded. The magnificent scene reminded him of his beloved Paris. A French song rose upon his lips, and sought the air before he knew that he was singing. His blood was quickened, every nerve was tense to be played upon by chance and accident. Now when he remembered the evenings spent in that underground hut of Joost, how the family had sat looking at each other with solemn faces till



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bedtime, then had retired with impressive gravity, he laughed aloud. Jan Janssen with never a word, save that which necessity drew from his miser's hoard; Vrouw van Boendale, tiresome lady, without the sauce of youth or beauty; Hendrik, always thinking upon misfortunes; Wilhelmina and Kenau, impossible girls! Belle-Isle extended his arms as if about to fly. He was free!

It was true, he owed to Hendrik the clothes upon his back, to Jan the sword at his side, to Madame van Boendale the money in his pocket. He was grateful, he felt for them a warm friendship. But he could not help liking them better at a distance. His hand sought his money, while with a smile he recalled Vrouw van Boendale's advice. With this money he must purchase a small stock of goods in Germany, whither he should return. He need spend none of it till he had reached his destination, for he could work his way, upon foot, as he had come to Brussels.

This was Vrouw van Boendale's advice, sanctioned by solemn nods from Jan and Hendrik. But Belle-Isle had no intention of putting that money to such a sordid use. He had no care for his future career. The Belle-Isle of next week could look out for himself. The Belle-Isle of to-night intended to see Rosamunda. A large clothier's shop opened upon the Grand Square, toward which many of the soldiers were making their way. Belle-Isle joined the procession. In due time he had not only purchased a mask, but a complete suit of clothes of various splendid colors. Flesh-colored hose, a crimson velvet

## THE DUEL WITH ROSAMUNDA

doublet, and a velvet peach-colored cloak greatly enhanced the natural beauty of Belle-Isle — and decreased his small capital almost to the vanishing point. He was shown into an inner room, there to make his toilet. And when he saw himself attired in every point as a gentleman, his polished sword showing handsomely against the crimson of his doublet, his heart was lifted up. He executed a solitary dance, snapping his fingers to keep time.

He clapped on his mask, and sallied forth, following those who were masked like himself. Ascending the hill he came to the Ducal Palace, which overlooked the city. Link-boys lighted the way. On the left of the magnificent building stretched the park, darkened by a heavy wood, that now appeared gloomy and threatening. But on the right of the Palace was a scene of lively festivity. Here stood the splendid mansions of Egmont, Orange, Culemburg. It was not difficult to distinguish the homes of Orange and Egmont. The former had stood grim and deserted since the Silent Prince fled from the wrath he foresaw. But the home of Count Egmont poured forth light from every window. The great doors of the court were thrown open, and a guard in rich livery scarcely challenged the guests as they crowded forward. It was impossible, on account of their masks, to determine who had a right to enter, save for the ticket each was required to bring. The soldiers were impatient to press forward, for strains of inspiring music called to them, and they had such a hearty contempt for the native guard that they laughed at the

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orders to halt and show the passport. Belle-Isle crowded in with the rest. The first chapter in his night's romance was closed.

It was now late. When Belle-Isle entered the reception-hall, dancing was in full progress. There were many women present, all masked. His eyes passed swiftly from form to form before he remembered that if Rosamunda was present, she would be attired as a soldier. He began to circle about the great apartment, carefully noting the men. She was not there. His heart suddenly sank so heavily that it crushed all the lightness out of his spirit. He had thrown away his money for a chance that had failed him!

But might she not come yet? He resolved to take up his place at the entrance door. He had scarcely done so when two Spaniards entered. One, tall and broad-shouldered, was unmasked; the other, — Belle-Isle's heart leaped. Here were Gonzalvo and his daughter! Yes, it must be Rosamunda! In an instant Belle-Isle was beside the slight form.

"Ho, comrade!" he cried in Spanish, "thou art late! Come with me and I will show thee what we have here to-night." He laid his hand upon her arm. His hand was thrown off rudely.

"Our eyes will show us," said Gonzalvo harshly. "We are not looking for men, but for ladies." They stepped out on the floor, selected partners and joined in the dance. Belle-Isle kept his eyes upon the form of Rosamunda, hardly taller than that of her lady. When the figure was over, and those two stood talking, Belle-

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Isle slipped to her side and whispered in her ear, "Rosamunda!"

Instantly the hand of the masked form went to its heart. The Frenchman added eagerly, "Fear not; I am Belle-Isle."

The soldier turned upon him brusquely. "Leave me; I have company. Another time."

Belle-Isle did not recognize the voice, but he was sure there had been no mistake.

"Now, now!" he whispered impetuously. "I must speak to thee."

The other said in a low voice, "I shall be in the garden presently." Then the soldier turned to the lady, who had stood wondering, and led her out to another dance. Belle-Isle glanced carelessly about and discovered Gonzalvo watching him with a dangerous light in his haughty eyes. He could not have recognized the Frenchman; but he knew him to be the same who, before, had laid his hand upon his daughter's arm. A spirit of reckless bravado prompted Belle-Isle to stride over to the Spaniard. Assuming a harsh, insolent voice he said,

"Well, and why lookest at me?"

Gonzalvo, on account of his rank, had been free to attend the masquerade without a mask. Thus the red color that instantly dyed his cheeks was pleasantly perceptible to the young man. "Thou art no Spaniard," said the captain, in a voice of rage. "Beware, for thy countrymen stand upon the crater of Alva's wrath. See to it that thou come not near yonder soldier,

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whom thy importunity hath thrice annoyed this evening."

"And what is yonder soldier," retorted Belle-Isle, "that I should not approach him? Is he made of glass, or powder? Will he break, or blow up? I have a secret, worthy man, but I will share it with thee. It is this — that I do not like thee, señor. Thou art no more to my taste than garlic, fair sir. God give thee good evening, señor." Belle-Isle turned upon his heel and marched away, feeling very high-spirited; he laughed to himself as he sought the garden. He took his stand at the foot of the staircase, that the one he sought might not escape him.

A full moon had risen, showing many couples wandering among the shrubbery. The air was sweet with perfumes. The music came in softened intervals, like a breeze that seems to pause on its way from tree-top to tree-top. When the strains became inaudible, laughter and merry voices filled the pause.

At last, at the head of the stairs, Belle-Isle saw the red mask behind which his fancy beheld the features of Rosamunda. She came down the stairs, walking with a manly stride, and speaking to her companion as men speak to a pretty face by moonlight. When they reached the pavement, Belle-Isle stepped before them.

"Ah," said Rosamunda in her soldier's voice, "here is the señor of whom I spoke. Let us seek an arbor."

"But I would see thee alone," said Belle-Isle.

"That cannot be," replied Rosamunda, "for I cannot leave Señorita Bluemask."



*“ ‘ Thou art no more to my taste than garlic, fair Sir ’ ”*





## THE DUEL WITH ROSAMUNDA

"Little soldier," said Belle-Isle desperately, "I must see thee alone."

"And what wouldst thou with me, Señor Crimson-douplet?"

"What would I without thee!" cried Belle-Isle. They reached an arbor which was unoccupied; entered, and seated themselves. The moonlight fell over them. They were upon a bench, Rosamunda in the middle, Bluemask upon her left.

"Thou wilt not see me alone?"

"Bluemask," said Rosamunda, "shall I leave thee, and hold converse with this ungallant comrade?"

"Leave me?" cried the lady, laying a little hand upon Rosamunda's arm. Rosamunda kissed the hand, then held it up toward Belle-Isle. "Wilt have a kiss?"

"Ay, will I!" cried Belle-Isle, stooping forward.

"Oh!" exclaimed Rosamunda, rubbing her hand. "To be kissed thus! This cannot be borne!"

"It was so dark," said Belle-Isle, "that I missed the right hand. Let us try it again."

"Never mind, sweet Bluemask," said Rosamunda, "I am thy true knight."

"Bid him depart!" cried Bluemask petulantly.

"I go this instant," said Belle-Isle rising, "if the little soldier will accompany me."

"Thou seest," said Rosamunda, "that I cannot desert Bluemask."

"Little soldier," said Belle-Isle with dangerous tenderness in his voice, "I beseech thee grant me this favor, for I may never see thee again."

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"How can I leave my love?" returned Rosamunda reproachfully. "How can I leave this gentle creature, this dainty head, this slender hand and snowy arm?"

Belle-Isle's voice grew stern. "It is thus thou wilt treat me to the end? Am I nothing to thee but a jest?"

"Thou art more to me than a jest," said Rosamunda with a careless laugh. Then she added with sudden significance. "But my own life is something." He was struck both by the words and her tone. Evidently she dared not leave this woman, on account of her father. Belle-Isle resumed his place beside her with a heavy sigh.

"He will stay," complained Bluemask. "What does he want with thee?"

"He hath no lady to love," said Rosamunda, "so he envies me."

"I envy thee!" said Belle-Isle with a sudden sneer. "As for this creature, did not two thousand of them come over with the army? Here were a goodly number to choose from!"

Bluemask uttered a cry of fury as she leaped up. "Thou hearest this fellow's words!" she cried fiercely. "Thou hearest, little soldier!"

"Ay," said Rosamunda, drawing her sword.

"Put up thy sword!" said Belle-Isle sternly. "Wouldst fight for such as she?"

"For such as she!" echoed Bluemask, in a hissing voice, as if her breath were about to fail her. "And what am I, thinkest thou? Thou heartless villain! to compare me to those abandoned wretches."

## THE DUEL WITH ROSAMUNDA

The little creature tore off her mask with a trembling hand. "Look at me!" she cried rapidly. "See what I am, — no Spaniard, no, no, not a drop of Spanish blood in my veins! Thou wilt not suffer him to insult me thus, Enrique!"

"Defend thyself!" cried Rosamunda, facing the Frenchman with drawn sword.

"Thou wilt not fight with me!" returned Belle-Isle. He did not draw his sword. "Thou couldst never fight with me, little one, after all that has passed."

"Draw thy sword, señor," said Rosamunda resolutely.

Belle-Isle could not think her in earnest. "Why dost thou make so much ado, little soldier, and play thy part so far? Is she worth a second thought? Does not the first thought weigh all her worth and find it lighter than her lightest fault?"

"Señor," said Rosamunda, "wilt thou draw?"

"Never against thee," he replied, not once looking at the one who had worn the blue mask.

"I am sorry," said Rosamunda sternly, "for in that case I must run my blade through thy body."

"It will be rather awkward," said the Frenchman.

"Not at all," returned his antagonist. "My father will recognize thy face when the mask is torn away, and he will cry me a dutiful child. For thou art one more man than is needful to people the sphere of his content."

"And am I nothing to thee?" he asked her, his voice suddenly growing hard, for now he knew she was in earnest.

"I pray thee draw, señor," was her answer.

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Belle-Isle drew his sword.

She of the blue mask clasped her hands. "Now the saints be with my little soldier!" she cried in a voice that trembled with excitement.

"This came almost to the point of being a comedy," said Belle-Isle. "But we have a tragedy by a hair!"

Their swords clashed together in the moonlight.

He had thought to play with her, to parry her thrusts lightly, and presently to send her weapon flying through the shrubbery. But he found himself confronted by one whose quickness, daring, and skill called forth all his qualities as a swordsman. At first he experienced a shock of surprise, then alarm. While her strength should endure, she was his match. When that failed her, he feared a thrust in his own defence might wound her body which was so dear to him. He stood on the defensive, and she beset him with lightning rapidity, as if she had thoroughly made up her mind to have his life. He felt an anguish of spirit because she could be so resolute in her determination to kill him. What would he not endure to spare her pain? And yet she, from a foolish whim or from mere bravado, turned her experienced blade toward his heart. Nay, it even seemed that she had taken advantage of this singular turn of events to put an end to his adventures. Perhaps from the first it had been her intention to seek a quarrel with him, and thrust him through.

That he should die by the hand of a woman, even the hand of Rosamunda, was an insupportable thought. The sense of wrongs endured and shame intended,

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caused his arm to assert its accustomed energy. He struck her blade from him. She withdrew just in time to avoid the full force of his blow. Then her steel leaped toward him like the sudden dart of a serpent's tongue. He bent backward to avoid the attack. Her sword tore his weapon from his grasp. At the same time he fell upon his back, for his foot had slipped in his attempt to escape her furious charge. He fell out of the glare of the moonlight, and the sudden darkness blinded him. He felt her foot upon his breast. He started to rise when her voice came sharp and clear. "My sword is at thy throat, Señor Crimsondoublet. Do not move!"

He lay still while his blood boiled, and his breath came in heavy gasps.

"Do not kill him," said Bluemask, who had drawn near.

"Yield!" cried Rosamunda.

"Ay, indeed," said Belle-Isle with a hard laugh.

"Retract thy words as touching the fame of this lady," said Rosamunda sternly.

"I am at thy mercy," said Belle-Isle.

"Retract!"

"I desire to live," he murmured.

"Retract!" she repeated calmly.

"Well," he said, "I retract all my words."

She took her foot from his breast, and he slowly rose to his feet, and looked about for his sword. It lay under the bench. He picked it up, and thrust it into its sheath. His face was dyed with the red of shame.



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He did not look toward Rosamunda, but as he started to leave the arbor, he found Bluemask standing in the entrance. She drew aside to let him pass. He paused a moment, and as she still clutched her mask nervously in her hand, he stared into her face.

His own mask had been torn away in his fall, and he made no effort to recover it. She looked at him intently, forgetting that her own face was exposed. When she realized this was the case, she covered her face with a low cry of alarm. But the Frenchman had used his opportunity well. He had discovered the sweet young face of a mere girl. Although the features were not yet mature, they wore a look of refinement he could not have believed possible. The wonder of that noble brow and the pure light of her eyes, caused him, for an instant, to forget his indignation against her who had overthrown him.

As she replaced her mask, he stepped before her. "Lady," he said, "what I was compelled to retract at the point of the sword, I am compelled to retract at the glance of thine eyes. One look into thy face has made me as jealous of thy honor as thy mother could desire."

"Señor," said Rosamunda, coming forward, "here is thy mask."

Belle-Isle turned suddenly upon her, and exclaimed, not seeing the mask she held toward him, "The next time we fight together, our little romance will have a new ending!"

"Sayest so?" cried Rosamunda. "Come, then, let us do it now."

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Belle-Isle walked swiftly away, and as he passed the gay company that thronged the walks of the garden, they paused to stare at his unmasked face. He had no thought for them. He had reached the outer staircase, meaning to make his way through the palace and flee forever from the presence and from the thought of Rosamunda. But he came face to face with her father. Each, being unmasked, recognized the other instantly. Gonzalvo now knew that the insolent stranger in the crimson doublet was the same who had defied him more than a week ago, whose friends had slain several of his comrades, and who had effected the escape of the veiled lady. A fierce scowl appeared on the warrior's face as he grasped his sword. At sight of his anger, Belle-Isle immediately forgot his own shame and fury, and became smiling and at ease.

"It seems, señor," he said with a bow, "that Fate desires us to become acquainted, else she would not so often throw us in each other's way."

"Thou speakest apt words," said the old man, drawing his sword, "for thou art very much in my way, fellow."

"Then let us make one less of us," said the Frenchman. "Let us seek a secluded spot in the garden, and fight where no one will disturb us with their vulgar gaze."

"That is very well," said the other, his gray eyebrows almost meeting in a fierce frown, "but how know I that thou art worthy to die by my sword? Nay, I will call my men to harness thee to the rack."

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"No, thou wilt not," said the young man easily. "As a Spanish gentleman, Señor de Oviedo, thou wilt do nothing of that nature. Thou wilt fight with me. I am one of the Colignys of France, and have as much right as another to die by thy sword. Thou wilt come with me, if thou art not afraid to meet so youthful and sprightly a cavalier."

"Enough! I will fight with thee with double pleasure because thou art of that family of noble heretics. Come, I know a place well suited."

The garden of Egmont extended many acres, and it was diversified by winding paths, so that one unaccustomed to the place might easily lose his way. The groves and arbors and towering shrubs hid the paths from each other in such a manner that an effect of seclusion was given to many a nook in the inclosure.

At first it was Belle-Isle's intention to put an end to this tiresome old gentleman. But he began to reflect that no glory could be won by killing Gonzalvo, still less by being slain. It would be an adventure to fight, but it would be still more an adventure not to fight. On the whole, the latter seemed the pleasanter sport. Accordingly, when they were traversing a narrow path with high banks of flowering shrubs on either hand, the Frenchman made a running leap, cleared the barrier on his right, and disappeared. Gonzalvo was unable to follow, both on account of his heavy armor, and by reason of a certain unelastic stiffness which Time bestows with one hand while he is presenting experience with the other. This rigidity was purely physical, how-

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ever. The spirits of the old man leaped in buoyant rage, and he raised a cry of alarm that brought some of his men hurrying to his assistance.

In the meantime Belle-Isle darted from path to path, gradually decreasing his speed. He mingled as little as possible with the gay company, on account of his exposed face. At last he came to a spot that appeared familiar. It was, indeed, the very arbor where he had parted from Rosamunda and Bluemask. He crept near, and made a little nest for himself in the shrubbery, where he was safe from discovery. Voices came to him from the bench which he could have touched with his hand. The moonlight showed him Rosamunda and Bluemask, sitting close together, their backs turned toward his hiding-place.

"Why wilt thou have me say it so often?" said Bluemask. "Thou knowest, Enrique, how much I love thee."

"It is sweet to my ears," said Rosamunda. "How long hast thou loved me, darling Anna?"

"Since first I saw thee in the review, Enrique. I knew thee at once to be unlike any man I had ever met."

"I think that true enough," observed Rosamunda. "I was never like other men, sweet."

"I had never looked at men before that morning," said Bluemask, otherwise Anna. "They seemed so big, so strong, and so cruel. I am glad thou art not big, Enrique, like thy father. I am never afraid of thee, although I am alone with thee, and I am so young, — only fifteen! But, oh, how brave is my little soldier!

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When I saw thee set thy foot upon that great bragging soldier, with his evil taunts, I could have knelt and kissed thy foot. Dost thou think less of me, Enrique, because I love thee more than thou lovest me? "

"How sayest thou, thou lovest me more than I love thee? "

"Why, it is very plain, my lover! I know what I would do if I did not fear thou mightest think less of me. And that would be to take off my mask and say 'Good evening' to thy lips."

Rosamunda removed her mask, and Belle-Isle heard them kiss. Then Bluemask continued, "It is very wrong, I know. Oh, it is very wicked to love thee so, for me who am a girl! My father would turn me from his door. And my mother, — it would break her heart. But that would be because they are old. I am not old. Perhaps they acted thus twenty years ago."

"How didst thou know me in my mask, Anna? "

"One glance at thy form. I know thee in any disguise. Thy face is so smooth, Enrique! Promise me thou wilt never grow a beard."

"I swear it, by my sword!" cried Rosamunda.

A voice spoke at the entrance: "Who is within?"

"Is that my father?" called Rosamunda. "I am thy son, Enrique, and my lady is also here."

Gonzalvo entered the arbor. "Ah, Enrique," he said gruffly. "And is that the lady-bird? Well, well! Thou art a sad rogue, Enrique! But hast seen anything of an accursed naked-faced, long-legged fugitive in crimson doublet?"

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"We are quite alone, as thou seest, father," answered Rosamunda. "We have seen no fugitive."

Gonzalvo went away. Anna said in a low voice, "Can he mean that cruel man who fought so ill?"

"Ay, sweetheart, I think so. But let us not betray the wretch. I feel no anger for him."

"Enrique, thou hast told thy father? Doth he consent to our marriage?"

"It likes him well, darling," said Rosamunda.

"Oh, when may it be?" said Anna with a tremulous sigh. "Dear heart, wait not for my parents, they will never consent, for they are bitterly prejudiced against thy countrymen. When we are married they will relent."

"It may not be at present, love. Thou hast not known me two weeks. Thou art a child. Nay, let us be content to love and hope." Rosamunda sighed deeply. Anna sighed. "Let us return to the house," said the little soldier. They arose. Rosamunda's mask had fallen from the bench. Belle-Isle reached forth a cautious hand and secured it. After a silence during which the lovers were motionless with their arms about each other, Rosamunda turned. "Where is my mask?" she inquired.

At first Anna did not answer, because she was sobbing. At last she said, "It was upon the bench."

"So I thought, but it is gone. There, Anna, weep not. All will be well. Trust to thy Enrique!"

"Anna!" called a stern voice from the entrance.

"Yes, father," said the girl, in a frightened voice.

"Thy mother hath sent for thee," said a man entering, and taking her arm.



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"I am not alone, father," said Anna timidly.

"So I see," observed her father dryly. "Well, any one who wishes to see thee, will find thee in the reception-hall. There is too much of garden in thy plan, Anna."

"I have protected the lady," said Rosamunda haughtily.

"My thanks, señor," returned the father grimly. "Methinks thou mightst have protected her better with thy mask upon thy face! I wish thee good evening, señor."

Anna and her father departed. Rosamunda sank upon her knees, and felt upon the ground for her mask. She could not find it.

"Where can it be?" she murmured in a voice of impatient perplexity. "What shall I do?"

"Behold thy mask and thy conquered foe," said Belle-Isle, rising before her.

## Chapter Ten

### ROSAMUNDA'S SECRET

**T**HE little soldier gave a startled cry, but instantly rallied. "Belle-Isle!" she exclaimed in a low but earnest voice, "I am glad it is thou."

"And I am also glad it is I," he returned.

"There was something I would have said to thee," she murmured.

"And there is something I would have said to me, lady."

"Give me the mask, señor."

"Let us seat ourselves upon the bench, lady," he said, holding the mask away from her outstretched hand.

"Is thy life nothing to thee, señor?"

"Nothing to hide away in a bag, lady. An thou sit not down, thou shalt not have thy mask."

"Thou art rash and foolish," said Rosamunda, seating herself. "And thy voice is much altered, señor. Hath fear, or recklessness, marred the harmony of thy tones?"

"Turn thy head a little away, Rosamunda; there is a shadow on thy cheek. I would see thee in all thy cruel beauty."

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"Why cruel?" she asked in a low voice.

"How beautiful thou art!" he exclaimed. "Now it must be that there is power in my soul that I little dreamed was there. By Belle-Isle! I must be a great man, after all. I can look steadily into thy face, señorita, and feel no love for thee."

A hot flush swept over her cheeks. She turned quickly away. Belle-Isle rose. "God send thee good evening," he said. "I am well content. Here is thy mask. Thy beauty is no less, and thine eyes and mouth have that same sweet look of pride that stirred my depths. But the charm is all gone, Rosamunda; thou art naught to me."

"Stay," said Rosamunda, as he started away. She held her mask forgotten at her side. "Belle-Isle, I have not yet told thee my message."

"True enough, señorita! Well, let us have the message. Only thy wish could keep me beside thee, for I swear I have no liking for thy company, lovely lady!"

"I have nothing to tell thee," she said with sudden anger. "Go!"

Belle-Isle passed cautiously to the entrance, and looked out, to see if any of his pursuers were in sight. While he paused, Rosamunda changed her mind, and stole up behind him. "Belle-Isle!" she said, touching his arm.

"Very well, little soldier; is thy speech long?"

"Señor, I pray thee hide behind the bench. And I will sit upon the bench, so if any one comes, I shall be thought all alone. For I must tell thee my excuses."

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"Is it, my lady, that thou wouldst have me at thy feet again? Come, however, we will play this little comedy."

Rosamunda seated herself sideways on the bench, and looked over the back at Belle-Isle. "Hear me, Belle-Isle."

"Then feed me with words, lady, as I have been feeding myself with illusions. Behold, I am like a young pigeon, waiting for his food with gaping mouth."

"When thou saidst in thy rashness that Bluemask was like the two thousand women who came with our army from Spain, what could I but fight thee? I am her lover, we are to be married, — so thinks Bluemask. Could I suffer thee to insult her needlessly, when she looks upon me as her future husband?"

"It may be, señorita, but how could I know thou hadst ever seen her before? And the way she spoke to thee was enough to confuse a philosopher."

"Thou knowest I had to fight for her, Belle-Isle. Be just! Had I refused, she would have detected my secret. In that case I should have been ruined."

"Rosamunda, I am getting interested in the world again. Wast thou sorry to fight me?"

"I was sorry to put thee to shame, Belle-Isle, but I could do nothing else. My evil destiny forced me to the deed. I knew thou couldst have overthrown me, but I also knew thou wouldst not. An accident came to my aid."

"Yes, yes, Rosamunda," he said eagerly, "it was a pure accident; thou seest that, lady!"

## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

"Certainly, Belle-Isle."

"Any man might have slipped in that spot," he cried getting to his feet impetuously.

"It might have befallen the Duke of Alva himself!"

"It was not because I am a poor swordsman," exclaimed the Frenchman.

"I knew that at the time," replied the lady.

"Let us fight now," said Belle-Isle eagerly. "Come, Rosamunda, I will not hurt thee. Kill me if thou canst!"

"No, no, Belle-Isle. Why should we fight, we who have passed through the shadow of death together. Rather should we be very true friends."

"Alas, lady, how can I ever forget that thy foot was set in contempt upon my prostrate body!"

"Ah, proud Frenchman, many a man in my country would give much to kneel before that foot whose pressure filled thee with such mortification!"

"It was as the foot of an enemy that I regarded it," said Belle-Isle. "But as the foot of a friend,—by my soul, it is a very dainty and small member, indeed!"

"Are we then at peace, señor?"

"Not yet, lady. Here is this matter of Bluemask. How canst thou lead her on with false hopes?"

"She is naught but a child," said Rosamunda.

"That may be; but it seems to me she loveth thee well; thy femininity hath won her heart, though she knows not why she is won. How canst thou play with the child thus?"

## ROSAMUNDA'S SECRET

"This is nothing to thee, Belle-Isle," said Rosamunda with cold haughtiness.

"It is so much that I cannot look upon thee as worthy my friendship while I think these things. Now if thou carest for my friendship, clear thyself or let me go my way."

"And canst thou go thy way, Belle-Isle," she said, her voice altering suddenly, "as careless as thy tones?"

"Rosamunda, thou must be very much to me, or nothing. There is no half-way house to such loveliness as thine."

"I know not why I condescend to explain my actions to thee, a stranger, and a Frenchman. It seems I must have thy good opinion at the cost of my self-respect. We have met but once before, and probably shall not meet again. What is thy power, Belle-Isle? for never before did any one force my lips to speak, when my pride would turn the key in the lock. What art thou, Señor Crimondoublet? I am the daughter of De Oviedo y Varrez! How strange that thou shouldst know this secret. And now I am to tell thee of other private matters. What is thy power?"

"As to that, I have my own opinion," replied Belle-Isle. "Let us have more of this matter."

"I cannot silence my wonder and my uneasiness," said the lady, speaking as it were to herself. "This imperious voice of thine would once have turned me to stone. Now, I would do much to show thee honor, — thee without a home, without wealth or position! Yet why shouldst thou be honored?"



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"Reach me thy hand a moment, lady," said Belle-Isle, "and I will tell thee thy fortune."

"Ay, Belle-Isle, I like that much better than telling my secrets."

"Oh, we shall have the secrets in a moment," he said, "but first let us have the hand. Now this is an honor to hold thy hand."

"Do not, Belle-Isle. Release the poor little hand; it feels like a bird in a strong cage."

"So it is, lady, and my fingers are the strong bars, through which it cannot make its escape, flutter as it may. Now, proceed with thy story. Fear not for the bird, it is not confined to be eaten, but to be admired."

"This is an ignoble trap, señor; thou saidst it was to tell me my fortune."

"And thou saidst it was thy will to show me honor. Here is honor enough. And as for thy fortune, I discern it as follows: if thou canst clear thyself — for, by Belle-Isle, the matter of Bluemask causes my judgment to halt on its way to thy favor! — then thy fortune is this, — that the bird is in its master's cage."

"What means these foolish words, señor?"

"Nay, only the future can explain the meaning of the fortune-teller. Now for thy story."

"Hush!" said Rosamunda, suddenly snatching away her hand.

Footsteps approached. "Still here?" said Gonzalvo's voice.

"Still here, father," said Rosamunda. "But Anna has been taken away by her angry father."

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Gonzalvo entered, laughing harshly. Belle-Isle crouched behind the bench in the shadow. The Spaniard sat down saying, "It is a pleasant farce, Enrique. Hold her off as long as thou canst, Ro — Enrique. Yet not so long, — two weeks, let us say. Alva is about to establish a Council of Troubles, which shall have all matters of justice in its own hands. As soon as it is organized, we can put the accursed heretics to death by hundreds. Then all masks will be thrown off, and this Anna, — but where is thy mask?"

"Anna carried it away in her bosom," said Rosamunda quickly. Gonzalvo gave a short laugh, then said, "Who was that fellow in the crimson doublet who put his hand upon thine arm when first we entered the palace?"

"How should I know, father?"

"By my sword, Enrique, I had a most dastardly suspicion, just for an instant. Yet I knew thou couldst have told no one thy secret."

"Never, never, father," said Rosamunda, in the tremulous accents of fear.

He rose. "Should the thing become known, I should send thee to a convent; thou understandest, a living burial, yea, by my sword, — never to look upon the world again, as I am thy father! This, if through an accident thy sex become known. But if thou shouldst intentionally reveal thy secret, Rosamunda, I will show thee a fate thou hast thus far escaped!"

"Father, why dost thou speak so? Have I not always sought to obey thee?"

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“Rosamunda, if I have spoken without cause, forget these words. If thou art in danger, remember them. That man in crimson doublet for an instant caused such a devil to dance in my brain that I have not since grown calm. When he spoke to thee in that accursed voice, which I have recognized as the voice of my worst enemy, — I had for a moment such a thought that the room seemed to swim in blood. That thought was that thou and he had a secret between you. And I seemed to see thy punishment.”

“Father —”

“Let us to the house, Enrique,” said Gonzalvo, his hard voice suddenly becoming calm. “I will procure thee a new mask. But nay, it must be time for the feast. Come. If I have spoken without a cause, as I sincerely believe, — else we should not be standing thus, — still take my words as a warning.”

They left the arbor.

## *Chapter Eleven*

### *IN THE POWER OF THE INQUISITION*

**I**T was not difficult for Belle-Isle to escape from Egmont's garden. While the great banquet was in progress he climbed the wall, and stood once more in the street. It was deserted. The moon was laughing at her sleepy sister, the earth, from whom she had drawn away the mantle of midnight. The Frenchman hastened to descend the hill, and presently felt secure, since there was none to challenge his progress. His step was bent toward the retreat of the reformers, but his thoughts were not with the fugitives who spent their uneasy days in gloomy hiding.

He had begun to understand better the relations between Rosamunda and Gonzalvo. Fear had spoken in the daughter's voice, cruelty in that of her father. What kind of a father was this who compelled his daughter to dress and fight like a man, giving her no alternative but imprisonment in a convent? She must often feel shame and loathing for her man's attire, her man's speech, her man's actions; but this shame was better than death to life and its bright scenes. Thus Belle-Isle not only sympathized with the choice she had made, but felt a tender pity for her necessity of making the choice.

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He could understand how she had grown sick of her part; how with impatient disgust of her daily life, she had, that eventful night of their first meeting, discarded her man's attire for the dangers of a woman's dress. He remembered the waves of color that surged into her cheeks as she sat upon the bench in the full glow of the moon while he knelt holding her hand. How beseeching had been her eyes when she reached for the mask! How her face contracted in sudden pain when he showed anger! And when she wondered why she told him her secrets, how great and solemn had looked her eyes, as for a moment she forgot her condition! With what a sweet gentleness and trust she seemed suddenly to remember her attire, to appeal to him with her eyes, to imagine about her the rich robes that should have given her dignity and modesty.

"By Belle-Isle!" muttered the young man, "there was never before a lady so proud in a situation so humiliating. I could have thrown my own peach-colored cloak about her and hidden her loveliness to the despite of my enraptured eyes! Oh, Rosamunda, so proud, so haughty, yet so humble and sweet; above all, so exquisite in face and form! To think that I must leave thee in that scene of festivity beside thy sour villain of a father, and slink back to the hole where these poor Dutch mice nibble at their Dutch cheese of existence! But to-morrow I leave that hideous nightmare of *ennui*."

It was Belle-Isle's intention to steal back to the hut of Joost van Boendale, if possible without waking any

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of the snorers. Why need those heavy sleepers know that he had been from the house that night? It was at least two hours before Joost and Hendrik intended to leave the place. Then he could bid all good-bye, render thanks for hospitality and favors received, and depart, leaving no suspicion that he had spent a few delightful hours in the camp of the enemy. And how delightful those hours had been! — with just a sufficient mixture of anger, excitement, heartache, and rapture to satisfy youthful ambition.

The Frenchman reached the deserted hut; his mind had been so absorbed with thoughts of Rosamunda that he had forgotten to return to the clothier's and dress himself in Hendrik's suit, which he had left there to be called for that night. He lifted the door, and as the rope-ladder was gone, he rapped upon the floor in the approved manner. Scarcely had he done so when he became disagreeably conscious of his crimson doublet and peach-colored cloak and flesh-tinted hose, which so admirably revealed his symmetrical person from ankle to waist. He hastily closed the door and started to run away, hoping to make the exchange and return. Perhaps his knocking had not been heard.

His hope proved delusive. His knocking had been heard. From around the decaying walls of the hut sprang the forms of Spanish soldiers. It was so sudden, and their number so great, that he was overpowered before he could draw his sword.

"Another water-rat!" said a voice with a hoarse laugh. "This is a sweet night's work. Fifty-five?"



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"Fifty-six," one of the men said in correction.

Belle-Isle was rudely dragged away, a soldier at each arm. He had not yet recovered from his miserable surprise.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I am not a native of this country, but —"

"How now, Rodrigo," said one who went in advance, "canst not choke the fellow? Is his whining music to our ears? Has his throat no softness? Clutch it, an he speak another word."

Belle-Isle made no further attempt at expostulation. He was in the hands of the Inquisitors: that he knew by the uniforms. His nationality could not save him. He had been discovered at the trap-door; therefore he was a traitor. Believing death at hand, the Frenchman grew calm, even jaunty. He would have talked, he would have sung, but he knew they would strangle him at the first sound. His hopelessness gave him a hard, reckless sense of gayety. It was bitter to his soul that he could not jest with his captors, and show them he was without fear. He expressed his feeling as well as he could in his step and look. He swaggered. He looked mocking laughter from his bright eyes. His lips curled in a sardonic humor.

They brought him at last to a stone building, square and oppressive in effect. It was one of the great prisons of Brussels. A guard stood at the door, evidently awaiting them. The soldiers pushed Belle-Isle into an inner room without windows. The link-boys who had preceded the little procession took their places upon

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stone platforms where the lights from their torches fell over the reeking apartment. A crowd of prisoners stood together in a corner, while an official recorded their names and all the information he could extract. The prisoners were shivering as with the ague, and occasionally bitter cries broke from the children and sobs from the women. They were in a wretched condition of exposure and filth. Evidently they had been hurried from their beds. The men for the most part were dressed save for their bare feet, but the women were in their nightdresses. All were dripping with water, for they had been driven waist deep through the black lake, while the Spaniards had pressed behind them upon the rafts. How cruelly they had pressed upon them was evidenced by their condition, showing that they had sometimes been knocked down in the water. Their hair was wet and matted, and their arms showed bruises. The oozy mud had been splattered over them, giving many a bloodless face a ghastly effect. In their miserable condition it was impossible to keep the teeth from chattering audibly. The children were embraced in straining arms that sought to give a little warmth from bodies quivering from the shock of being hurled into the water, then driven through the night air almost naked.

The soldiers gave Belle-Isle a vindictive push that almost threw him to the floor, and he found himself face to face with the company. There was such a contrast presented by his handsome face with its sardonic grin, his rich attire, and his attitude of defiant careless-

## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

ness that a shout of laughter rose from the soldiers. Belle-Isle found it impossible to preserve his nonchalance before this living picture of misery; his smile vanished, and the tilt of his head was lost.

At first he gained only a general effect of wretchedness, but now he distinguished in the front rank of Christian soldiers, Wilhelmina Janssen. His eyes darted from her face. Yes, here were her father and brother; here also were the Van Boendales, — Joost, Kenau, and Kenau's aunt. One lightning glance showed him these companions in misery; then his eyes returned to Wilhelmina. Like Kenau and Vrouw von Boendale, she was in her nightdress. Her hair was plastered upon her brow with mud, her face was streaked with black daubs. Her bare arms were coated, showing where she had fallen, driving her elbow into the viscid muck. Her gown had been torn across the bosom, and she held it together as she looked steadily at the Frenchman. Water still dripped from her skirt in slow black drops which fell about her bare feet. Belle-Isle read her thought, and the blood surged into his face while he returned her look. Even in her grimy and drenched condition, her hand quivering with cold as it held the garment upon her breast, the muddy skirt clinging about her limbs, she presented a picture that affected him powerfully, apart from his sense of pity. Her presence was grand in its simplicity and in its modesty. Her face was lighted by an expression so lofty and so accusing that one forgot every touch of circumstance that sought to mar the picture. She was

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not beautiful, but misfortune lent her a dignity and a charm that beauty might have sought in vain.

“Ho, comrades,” cried a soldier, “we have one gay bird among these mournful doves! See its fine feathers!”

“Silence, Rodrigo!” said a priest harshly. “Is this scene of pious joy a place for such ribaldry?”

“Belle-Isle,” said Hendrik Janssen, pointing a quivering finger at the motionless Frenchman, “thou didst well to take my clothes from thy back when thou didst seek the destruction of thy benefactors! Hast thou come hither to mock us in our filth and rags? Then look upon my child, and be content!”

“Yes, look upon us, Belle-Isle,” said Wilhelmina. “See her who knelt to bandage thy wounds; see those who gave thee a home, and cared for thee! It was for this thou first didst come,—pretending to be a beggar! it was for this thou didst pretend to hate the Church of Rome, didst crawl to the lowest depths of hypocrisy, didst worm thyself into our confidence!”

“Here is some mistake, my masters!” exclaimed Rodrigo.

“Ay,” said the commander, “this must be the one who told our captain of the hiding-place. Thy pardon, Belle-Isle, if that be thy name. Thou art free to depart.”

“Then I pray thee leave us, Belle-Isle,” cried Wilhelmina. “Oh, add not to thy perfidy by gazing upon the misfortunes thou hast brought about!”

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Jan now spoke, "If the Holland Wolves had been here —"

"Ay!" cried Hendrik, "but this base plotter chose well his time! This was the last night of my stay in the retreat; it was perchance the last night thou wouldst have been there, dear Joost. Belle-Isle knew when to strike. He had been waiting. But go, wretch!" he cried, suddenly starting toward Belle-Isle in fury, "go and leave me and my children uncursed by thy venomous gaze!" His fist was clenched, and uplifted.

Belle-Isle shrank back, and a soldier pushed Hendrik into his former place. "My father!" cried Wilhelmina, putting her arms about his neck. She began to sob. Jan stared at her a moment with twitching mouth, then edged his way up to her.

"Belle-Isle," said old Joost, "thou hast done thy work with thoroughness. But what can I do better than forgive thee, my son, and pray the good God to change thy heart? Go forth, young man, into that liberty thou hast stolen from us. And may the sight that now meets thine eyes change thy heart and turn it toward heaven."

"Let us have done!" cried the commander roughly. "Away, young man, we have much business to dispatch. Accept our apologies, and repair to the home of Madame de Jasse in the morning at nine, and thy wages will be delivered thee according to contract. By our Lady, thou art as white as wax! Get thee gone, señor, and praise God for a good deed."

"As God lives —" cried Belle-Isle.

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"He calls upon God!" cried Wilhelmina, looking up wildly. "He, the conspirator! Dost thou hear him, father? He calls upon God!"

Belle-Isle was hurried from the room. At first it had been his impulse to declare the truth openly, and share the fate of his benefactors. But although this course had much of magnificent heroism to recommend it,—much of dashing effect that was dear to his fancy,—it lacked a certain element of utility that caused him to hesitate. Yet he had found it well-nigh impossible to meet that look of Wilhelmina. In her disordered state, but partially clothed and shivering from cold, still he could compare her to nothing but an offended angel, awful and severe in her pure and righteous wrath. He realized to the utmost the contrast his rich attire and handsome face presented before that squalid group. He understood how his secret departure from the hut this night of all others, when both Joost and Hendrik were there, was to them inexplicable save from the standpoint of horrible treachery.

But it was possible he might save them. In sharing their imprisonment he should rob them of this chance.

Yes, even while Joost was forgiving him, there came the quick thought that through Rosamunda as a Spanish soldier he might effect the rescue of his friends.

## *Chapter Twelve*

### *HOME IN THE WOODEN GLOVE*

**B**ELLE-ISLE hurried from the prison to the clothier's. A sleepy apprentice sat in the dimly lighted room, waiting for the return of the masqueraders. The party had not yet left Count Egmont's. Belle-Isle's sudden entrance startled the apprentice into a half-waking state. The Frenchman hurriedly called for the bundle he had left there several hours before, then retired to the rear apartment, where he changed his suit, and once more stood in the clothes given him by Hendrik Jansen. Returning to the storeroom, he bought a bag, in which he placed his peach-colored cloak, crimson doublet, flesh-tinted hose. Then he left with his bag upon his shoulder, and in his pocket one small coin. The streets were deserted and dark except where a gap in the tall line of buildings allowed the moon to cast vividly defined geometric figures upon the cobblestones.

Belle-Isle crept into an obscure passage and seated himself upon some steps. The air was warm and balmy. September had begun her rule, but August still







*“ ‘ Here we go,’ he muttered, ‘ Belle-Isle and his sword  
against the world’ ”*

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lingered in the heart of the world. The young man drew his sword and began to cut gashes in his clothes. Presently his doublet and jerkin were in rags. "This goes to my heart and pinches it," he muttered, as he continued his work of demolition. "But no half-way measures. A very good suit and a very bad one for him who lives in disguise. I am a noble, or a beggar. At present I am a success as a mendicant, save that I be too clean. He who lives in poverty never wastes soap."

He rose, thrust his sword into its scabbard and shouldered his bag. "Here we go," he muttered, "Belle-Isle and his sword against the world! But I must stop this risky habit of talking to myself. Or rather let me practise to some purpose. Hum! Let us be an old man. Ah, lack-a-day, driven from my home by my own son! Forced to seek a new roof in my old age, I, with the snows of sixty winters in my beard. Where shall I get such a beard? Nay, my locks have not turned with my age. It is a birth-mark, this black hair. None of my ancestors ever grew gray."

Belle-Isle paused to laugh softly, then pursued his way, looking sharply about with the experienced eyes of one who has before sought shelter without money or key. At last he reached the Grand Square and searched the huge façades and fantastic gables with an undaunted gaze. Experience told him that success lies hidden in strange nests, and there dwelt in his memory something he had casually glanced at that very night, when lights were abundant. Now the square showed lines of im-

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posing architecture towering silent and grim, while in the midst lay a great pool of moonlight, to which the buildings appeared as rugged cliffs and overhanging precipices. There stood the clothier's dimly lighted, but the other shops were long since closed. Before one hung the sign of a glover. It consisted of an enormous wooden glove, poised upon a high pole. Belle-Isle stopped, and stared upward at the sign. The mouth of the gigantic effigy was turned toward the building whose business it was designed to advertise. The fingers pointed toward the palaces of the Archers and Mariners. Across the front of the glover's shop, on a line with the mouth of the image, ran an ornamental ledge of stone, about two feet wide, and at least twenty feet from the ground. Above this ledge the building towered with many quaint windows and protruding corners, as if the huge pile were a curious monster, whose bones were bursting through its skin of stone.

"It is a great risk," muttered Belle-Isle, still staring upward, "but so is life itself; so is marriage; so is heaven." He drew a small object from his bosom. It was a red mask. "Perhaps I tell thee good-bye," he whispered, as he bent over it. It was the mask Rosamunda had lost in the arbor. The Frenchman kissed the holes through which her eyes had looked, the little hollow where her nose had rested, the place where her lips had breathed their sweetness, — ah, that thought! Then upon the edge of the mask he boxed the compass. It was, after all, an unsatisfactory substitute. The mask smelled more of paint than of Rosamunda. He thrust it

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back into his bosom. As he started away, he discovered that his foot had caught in some pliant object. He stopped, and found a second mask. Here was a strange coincidence! He carried it to the moonlight, and was immediately reminded of poor Bluemask. But the next moment he smiled at himself. Had she worn the only blue mask in the world? He walked silently to the corner of the glover's shop. Here a pair of outside stairs ran up to a door in the second floor. The young man ascended the stairs; but instead of stepping upon the triangular balcony that led to the door, he gained the ledge of stone, and began to edge his way along the face of the building. He was in shadow. His distance from the ground, and the narrowness of the ledge, caused him some uneasiness, especially as his bag sometimes slipped between him and the wall. But at last he reached the spot where he could look into the wooden glove. He found that it was securely fastened upon the pole by an iron rod which ran through the middle of the image and projected several feet above. The opening lacked but two feet of touching the ledge. Belle-Isle stooped cautiously and felt the structure. He could shake it, but not dangerously. The next moment he had disappeared within its protection.

Belle-Isle had found his lodging-place. In the middle of the glove he could almost stand erect. With arms extended he could barely touch the opposite sides. With a sigh of content he slipped past the iron rod that stood as a pillar in the hallway, and crawled to the hollows that appeared as fingers to the outside world. They

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were one above another like small round cells. In the highest he thrust his bundle. In the lowest, which was a plump, commodious thumb, he lay down to rest. There was a convenient aperture at the end, through which he could smell the fragrant world while he slept.

The next morning, long before there was any danger of any one appearing in the street, he dressed in his crimson doublet, stuffed his ragged clothes in his attic, and prepared to descend. He had been asleep only a few hours, but he was quite refreshed and ready for his adventure. It was darker than when he had climbed to his new home, for the big moon lay low and heavy in the sky, and the Hôtel de Ville cast a black shadow over the Great Square. Belle-Isle buckled on his sword and stepped upon the stone ledge. He noticed a little window which he had passed on his arrival. It was square, and made of glazed linen. He tried it and was surprised to find it unfastened. He passed, thinking of it no more. When he reached the ground, he wandered in unfrequented streets, always walking as if upon some pressing business. At half-past eight he stood partially hidden behind a brick wall, where he could watch the home of Madame de Jasse, the palace that protected the Duke of Alva and his friends, among whom were Gonzalvo and — Rosamunda!

Belle-Isle did not long remain in his niche. He glided before the closed gates of the palace, and stood carelessly humming a Spanish song, as if unaware that there was one within those gates who would have given much to run that crimson doublet through with a sword of



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vengeance. At last a man drew near, a man with a furtive manner, a cowering look, who often glanced behind him, and kept his hand constantly upon his sword.

"Ho, comrade," said Belle-Isle, stopping his song. "So we are come at last, hein? Yet thy nine o'clock is still waiting to be born."

"Thou knowest me?" asked the other in a husky voice.

"I know a true Catholic when I see him!" cried Belle-Isle, clapping the other upon the shoulder. "Come, we must settle this business in another place. The Duke is much wearied from his night's diversions, and hath given orders not to have the household roused though Elizabeth come from England to pay him a visit!"

The other followed Belle-Isle in silence, still glancing about him nervously.

"It was well done," said Belle-Isle, as he led the way. "There were fifty-five, and had almost been fifty-six, by Bel — by all the saints! I have the money for thee, brave Christian soldier, and the thanks of Alva besides." He resumed his song.

"It was easy enough," said the other with a harsh laugh. "There was an old fool, Joost van Boendale; he was proselytizing. I pretended to be a convert, and he opened his heart. He did not tell me of the rat-trap, but I followed him and discovered the hole."

"Thou art no Spaniard, I think?" said the Frenchman carelessly.

"Nay, I am a Flemish burgher, by thy leave."



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"Now, by the saints!" cried Belle-Isle, "thou hast given up many of thy countrymen to dancing flames!"

"They are no countrymen of mine," said the other roughly. "As God lives, we have no country any more, and it is Spain or the devil! How far do we fare, señor?"

"Why, to the river, an it please thee, good burgher. This money is a large sum, and I have it in hiding. Thy reward, in brief, is at that very rathole from which so many of the heretics have been chased. The soldiers guard it and await us. Come, let us be brisk, worthy soul."

"Why, I like this very well," said the Fleming. "There I earned my prize; there let me receive it."

"Ay, good sir, ay, it was Alva's thought. He is full of a many such quaint and delicate idea." Belle-Isle resumed his song and did not pause till he had come in sight of the deserted house where the fatal trapdoor had been built. As soon as they were near, Belle-Isle suddenly raised a shout for help, and falling upon his companion, felled him to the earth. The soldiers, who had been hiding, waiting for fresh victims to crawl into their own trap, rushed forth.

"It is that Belle-Isle who delivered up the heretics," cried the commander.

"Ay, hither!" shouted Belle-Isle. "I have a fresh heretic for the roasting. I have beguiled him hither with infinite labor and patience."

"Lies, lies, lies!" shouted the burgher, but Belle-Isle gripped his windpipe and the words died away.

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"He fought shy of me at first," said Belle-Isle, "he was a cautious villain. But I pretended to be a vile unbeliever like himself. He is one of these anabaptists who have seven wives because seven is a sacred number. A week of wives, ay, as I am a Christian!"

"Turn his windpipe out to play," said the soldier who had been addressed as Rodrigo. "For by the Holy Wounds, he will never live to die, an thy fingers so squeeze his pipe of life!"

Belle-Isle rose and the soldiers took the burgher in charge. The young man knew from his own experience that they would not suffer their prisoner to speak, and even if he should attempt his defence, who would believe him? The Frenchman had conclusive knowledge from his experience in the prison that few ever saw the real betrayer of the reformers, — perhaps Alva alone knew the wretch. There was little danger that Alva would take the trouble to investigate the rights of the prisoner. "A prisoner of the Inquisition" might be translated: "a victim for the stake." But even if this traitor should be set at liberty, which could only be after a long period of waiting, Belle-Isle had had his adventure, and he was high in the favor of the Spaniards. So long as he did not encounter Gonzalvo looking for a certain crimson doublet, — and there were many crimson doublets in Brussels, — all would be well. It is true that Joost would recognize his supposed convert if brought face to face. But it was the custom of that day to keep prisoners in solitary confinement; doubtless Joost was in some

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lonely dungeon, deprived of the companionship of his daughter and sister-in-law.

Belle-Isle remained with the soldiers who guarded the reformers' retreat. He became especially friendly with Rodrigo, sharing his breakfast. He found the soldier without that polish which so often concealed Spanish cruelty, but his heart seemed permeated with a certain bloody good-nature. It was dangerous bravado on Belle-Isle's part, and at last he relinquished the delight of danger, and took his departure, followed by the rude but kind farewells of Rodrigo. Belle-Isle left the place, his heart dancing with this sudden friendship. Rodrigo would have been impossible in polite society, on account of his oaths; but as a huge morsel of human flesh with passions, and a grin that turned out every gum naked to the world, the Frenchman thought him a delight.

Belle-Isle passed the rest of the day in obscure taverns. It was his intention to appeal to Rosamunda for the release of his friends. But how to reach her ear without discovery gave him all he wished to think of, without any immediate prospect of having an exhausted subject upon his mind. Shops closed early in those days, and before the moon rose the streets were very dark, save when link boys preceded drunken soldiers, or dainty nobles in their chairs. The young man went to the Grand Square when the shops were closed. The Hôtel de Ville was still brilliant, and the Brood-huis opposite showed signs of life. He dared not ascend to his apartments till the sounds sank to a hum, and the lights were softened. When he reached the ledge, his attention

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was attracted by the little window which he had tried that morning. Something white lay upon the sill, caught in the sash. It was a lady's handkerchief. He softly opened the sash, secured the handkerchief, moved by a mild curiosity, and gained the glove.

After a profound sleep, he prepared his toilet just before daybreak by donning the beggar's suit. He was now done with his gallant attire for some time, and he sighed as he pushed the bag into its receptacle, and placed the sword beside it. The little finger of the image slanted downward in such a way that the bag and sword were invisible from the grand saloon, as he termed the body of the glove with its iron pillar. He noted this with satisfaction, reflecting that should such an improbable accident occur as the invasion of the house, his property would almost certainly remain undiscovered.

When he reached the ground he was a beggar. It was still necessary to become an old man. This was accomplished by a stick to lean upon, a shrinking of the body, a humping of the shoulders, a racking cough, and a nasal tone. He gave an artistic completeness to his appearance by gathering a goodly heap of dust from a vacant lot and thoroughly scouring his hair, face, neck, hands, arms, and limbs in the dry wash. He felt a deep satisfaction in his appearance. Through holes in his dingy stockings the skin appeared as the skin of one who has lived close to the earth through many improvident years. Skilful lines upon his face from a blackened stick gave the effect of age. His hair lost

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the lustre of youth though it was still dark—as if it lacked the vitality even to grow gray. This old man walked slowly along with bowed head, his stick much in evidence. There was only one object about him not in keeping with his character; that was a lady's handkerchief in his bosom. Upon that handkerchief the following name was worked in silk: "Enrique de Oviedo y Valdez." Yes, it was Rosamunda's handkerchief. How came it in the little window above the ledge? And, whence had fallen that blue mask at the foot of the signpost? Here were two mysteries.

Belle-Isle was unable to drive the thought from his mind that both Rosamunda and Bluemask had been near his lodging-house, the former since he had taken up his quarters in the glove, but Bluemask before. Why had she come there the very night of the masquerade? If the mask was not Bluemask's, still the handkerchief was unmistakable. Had Rosamunda brought it herself? All day Belle-Isle haunted the Grand Square. He limped, he coughed, he whined, he begged, but not a glimpse of Rosamunda, not a glimpse of Bluemask. Late in the afternoon he wearied of the scene, and set forth toward the palace of Madame de Jasse. Perhaps he might be granted a glimpse of Rosamunda in her soldier's dress. But no; darkness came and his persistence was unrewarded. He saw Gonzalvo, who passed near him without recognition. He met Rodrigo, who stared at him insolently and ordered him out of the way. But the owner of the handkerchief did not appear.

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He passed a restless night in the glove, and the next day hovered persistently about Madame de Jasse's palace. Once he saw Rosamunda at a window, but she did not look toward him. Another day wasted! But Belle-Isle was not dispirited. The pure joy of acting his part, of brushing against Rodrigo, of looking into the eyes of Gonzalvo, animated him like wine. He was spending happy days of adventure and mystery. Life in the glove was enough to reward him for the dust in his hair. His uneasiness for Wilhelmina (the other prisoners did not count very much with the young man) had been set at rest by a suspension of executions. Everything was in abeyance until the Council of Troubles should be organized. Until then, the Netherlanders had a respite from persecution. Prisoners were still taken in droves to prisons, but the fires of religious fervor were being kept for the day of wrath.

Belle-Isle sought his favorite bedroom, the hollow thumb, and lay down to a well-earned rest. At first he did not know why his usual comfort was disturbed: then he realized that he lay upon a small object. He wondered sleepily what it could be. He thrust his hand under his side impatiently.

The next moment he sat up so suddenly that his head bumped sharply against the low ceiling. Even this bump did not drive wonder from his suffering head. The object in his hand was a dagger, small and keen. It was not a man's weapon. What then? Some one had been here upon a visit, — a lady! Belle-Isle crawled out into his grand saloon. He stared through the

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opening at the linen window. No sign of life. His presence in the glove could not have been discovered, for there was no message in a dagger. Belle-Isle examined his bag and sword to learn if they had been discovered. They lay as they had been left. It might be that the owner of the little weapon would come for it. He must not be discovered. The Frenchman placed the dagger in the extreme end of the thumb. Then he climbed into the hollow of the third finger, where he could lie at full length. His head was toward the body of the glove. He did not sleep. He was listening. After all, it might be a man who left the dagger.

It was very dark where he lay, and by contrast it appeared almost light at the mouth of the strange house. Hours passed by. Belle-Isle grew uneasy. It would soon be time for him to slip from his retreat. Perhaps there was half an hour left for his watching.

He heard a soft noise from the stone ledge, and his heart leaped. He held his drawn sword, determined not to be exposed. A form appeared at the opening, the slight form of a woman. Her features could not be discerned. The woman stealthily entered. Belle-Isle took his hand from the hilt of his sword. There would be no use for it, at all events. The woman came forward, and sank upon her knees. He heard her feeling upon the rounded floor.

Suddenly she spoke. "I must have left it here," she said eagerly. "Oh, I must have left it here! If I did not, what shall become of me? Oh! oh!" She had



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found what she sought. Belle-Isle heard the scrape of the dagger-hilt upon the side of the thumb. Belle-Isle had also found what he sought,—the solution of her identity. The voice from that slight form was the voice of the girl known to him as Anna, or “Bluemask.”

## *Chapter Thirteen*

### *A WOODEN GLOVE FOR TWO*

**B**ELLE-ISLE was confronted with the problem of making himself known to Bluemask, without driving her panic-stricken from the wooden glove. After all, there was but one way. The young man spoke: "Fear not lady,— I am a friend."

At the same time he dropped from the cavity of the third finger, to prevent her flight. For a moment the girl was rigid from the terrible shock. The Frenchman, who had foreseen this favorable moment of suspense, hastened to take advantage of it. "I am a poor old man, lady, one who begs crumbs from rich men's tables. There is no harm in me. I am wasted away from age and disease — " he paused to cough softly — "and I beg that my feeble body may give thee no alarm. I am upon the edge of the grave, lady, have pity upon me!"

Bluemask wiggled out of the hollow thumb, and found him opposite her retreat. "Let me go," she said, in a quivering voice. "My God! Oh, my father, my mother!" she moaned.

"Let thee pass, lady? Alas, how could these feeble bony arms hinder thy progress? Throw me down, and

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trample upon me. I am as wax. But, oh, for pity, hear my prayer!"

He suffered her to creep past him, and as she paused in the mouth of the glove, she became somewhat reassured.

"Well," she said, "I will hear thee."

"Lady, behold a miserable old man who drags upon his stick with no light in his life. I am driven from my home by my own son. Where shall I go? I have nothing. I become a beggar. From the taverns I am expelled. The soldiers insult me. I am exposed to the heavens. I discover this giant glove. I say, 'Here is my home!' I ascend. In the daytime I go forth to beg enough to feed my wasted body. Now, O lady, wilt thou expose me? Wilt betray me, and have me driven from my only resting-place?"

"No, poor old man, I will not betray thee," said the other in a gentle voice. "Should I betray thee, who am myself hiding from the world? Nay, I think I know thy voice."

"It may well be," said Belle-Isle with a sudden thought, "for day before yesterday I stood near this sign all day, begging of the hard-hearted passers-by."

"Yes," said the other, "I watched thee through the hole in the floor. I saw how they pushed thee aside, and how thou didst almost fall to the ground. Poor old man, rest content; thou, a wanderer, hast found a friend in a wanderer."

"Now the blessings of heaven descend upon thy head, lady," said the Frenchman. "And may I return hither

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to-night without fear of being seized and thrown into a dungeon?"

"Without fear, old man. Behold, I pass here my days, and why shouldst thou not here pass thy nights? We cannot be in each other's way; the little girl and the old man have a secret between them, I think — the secret of sorrow."

"Alas that I may not bear that secret alone!" he exclaimed. "I cannot think of one so young and fair forced to hide in such a place."

"And how knowes thou that I am fair?"

"Dost thou ask, maiden? Nay, to the old man, youth itself is beauty, for upon the form of youth he sees the gilding of life's morning sun. I must be gone before the dawn. Tell me, shalt thou be alone in this place throughout the day?"

"Yes, all alone, and the hours are so slow! One seems to stand still that the next may catch up with it. But I have come before my time, because I lost my dagger; that is my only friend in this place. I pray thee pause to eat. Art thou not hungry?"

"Alas, damsel, I am never alone, for hunger holds my hand by day, and whispers in my ear at night."

"A grisly companion!" she exclaimed, as she stepped upon the stone ledge and returned with a large box. "Here are my conveniences for the day," she went on: "It is too dark to see, but thou art 'no true beggar an thou canst not feel with thy nose! In this compartment is food. Here is my jar of water that grows so hot at noon; here my pillow, and other poor shifts of comfort."

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"What shall I take, lady?"

"Whatever thou wilt. I am never hungry, any more. Oh, it is such a joy to speak to thee, — I am sick of — I am so glad I watched thee, that day. I know just how thy poor back is bowed and how thy cough racks thy weak frame. I remember thy face, too. How old art thou?"

"Seventy, lady. I fear I rob thee, but this venison is much to my tooth. By Bel — by my swo — by the blessed saints, there is no gravy like hunger!"

"My heart warms with thy delight," she said softly. "Yet thy hair is black, for there was such a hole in thy hat! And thou hast no wig?"

"Black as a crow," said Belle-Isle, eating. "It runs in our blood. My ungrateful son, — his hair is like fine silk. There is not a gray hair in my head, lady, not one! My father lived to be ninety before a gray hair came. He plucked it, for he had a pride. He did not live long after that. God rest his soul, he was a good man!"

"I have a father," said the girl, "and he was so kind to me; and my mother loves me, — oh, that is what makes my grief heavier to bear, she loves me so. I am their only child. But what may I call thee?"

"Call me Old Norman. I must say farewell. Thy venison hath relieved me of my faintness. Blessings upon thee, lady! But before I go, — didst ever look in the little finger of this mighty glove?"

"When first I came here, Old Norman, — it was the night of the masquerade, — I searched well the place.

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Since then, I have been so occupied with thoughts of — of — of — ”

“ Yes, lady, I understand, — of him for whose sake thou hast deserted father and mother. Alas for us who are wrapped up in our children, how often our affection is turned out bare to the freezing ingratitude of those we love ! ”

“ They are cruel words, Old Norman ! ” said the girl, beginning to sob. “ I love my parents as much as ever ; only, a new love hath entered my life, which calls me to its service. Did not thy father and mother leave their parents for each other ? ”

“ Do not weep, child. I was thinking of my own son. Listen ! That very night of the Count’s masquerade, he came home in a fine passion, saying he had been in a duel with a little soldier, and had been overcome. I ventured to upbraid him for his lavish display, for he could ill afford the crimson doublet and peach-colored cloak he had bought.”

“ The little soldier ! ” echoed Bluemask ; “ the crimson doublet ! ”

“ Ay, child. I reproached him with his extravagance. Whereupon he stripped his fine suit from his back, cast it at me, and turned me out of the house into the night. Alas ! He hath newly married a lady, and it was her doing, I trow. Well, I put that suit in a bag, and fetched it hither, and it is in the hollow next our ceiling, with his sword beside it. At the worst I shall sell them to keep me alive. But as long as I can beg sustenance, I keep them for the love of my poor son whom marriage

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hath hardened. Farewell, lady. To-day I will loiter in the Grand Square, and the sight of me may cheer thy lonely heart."

"Thou art a kind old man. Indeed, I pity thee for that ungrateful son! Farewell."

"I only ask that thou come early to-morrow morning, that we may converse a little, for it cheers my poor old aching heart when the wine of thy youthful voice is poured into my ear." Belle-Isle descended to the deserted square, smiling behind the mask that the friendly darkness held before his face.

He often passed back and forth in the Great Square of Brussels, during the morning, sometimes glancing slyly up toward the thumb of the wooden glove. He had never been so bowed with age, never so dependent upon his staff. His cough was heard above the tramp of soldiers, and his plaintive petition for alms was whined above the clatter of hoofs. Later in the day he took up his position in that other scene of his daily acting,—the street before the splendid home of Madame de Jasse.

At last he saw Gonzalvo de Oviedo entering the palace. Belle-Isle, with that reckless daring that sweetened sourest moments to his palate, accosted the soldier. "God's blessing upon thy noble head, señor, but canst tell me if one Enrique de Oviedo y Varrez is within?"

Gonzalvo stopped motionless upon the first step. His keen black eyes flashed over the humble form of the beggar. It was a stern and unrelenting face, with a



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thin mouth that spoke of cruelty and disdain. "What wouldst thou with Enrique, fellow?"

"I would speak with him, noble señor," quavered Belle-Isle. "I have found that which belongs to him. A warrior told me he abides here. I would return him his property and thus obtain money, belike."

"I am his father," said Gonzalvo, stepping down into the street. "Give me this property, fellow, and I will reward thee."

"Nay, but I cannot give it unto thee, most puissant hidalgo," said the other, and began to cough violently.

"What!" cried the other, his dark face suddenly becoming ugly with a look of aroused suspicion, rather than of anger. "Dost exchange words with me, miserable old man? Deliver at once that precious parcel! Old man," he continued, grasping Belle-Isle's wrist, "how knewest thou of my son? How knewest thou this mysterious object was his?"

"His name is writ thereon," said Belle-Isle, seeking to draw away. "Thy grace's pardon, cavalier, but the object is no more a secret than I, myself. 'Tis but a handkerchief; that I know well, for I have seen such in the hands of other men. As for my nose, it is not of that dainty sort that must be put to bed every time it have a cold. No, no, gallant señor, no handkerchief for poor old Effin Dijk Dirk, — such being my name, at thy service, an it please thee, señor. For I am as pure-water a Dutchman as ever held liquor."

"Have done, fellow, and give me the handkerchief."

"Nay, I must go and fetch it, for I left it in the

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loft where I sleep. Wilt wait for me in very truth, señor?"

"Where foundest thou this handkerchief?" demanded the Spaniard, his eyes narrowing to dangerous-looking slits of wickedness.

"It was in front of the Count of Egmont's palace, handsome gentleman," replied Belle-Isle.

"Look thou, varlet, didst come here with a certain message to deliver Enrique?" asked Gonzalvo; "for now that I recollect, he was expecting a message this very day. Thou hast surely come with this message, good old man. Deliver it to me, and thy pocket shall jingle with gold coins."

"Lackaday, señor! it would jingle indeed, if I had any imagination to jingle in my brain. For thy offer is enough to tempt me to invent some message for this cavalier. But what can I say? I have no message, and I am no poet."

Gonzalvo turned from the beggar with a sigh of evident relief. He was such a suspicious gentleman, that Belle-Isle did not venture to recall him. He trusted fortune to send Rosamunda forth; but fortune proved a jealous mistress that day, and night came without a crown of success. Belle-Isle sought his lodging-house, not with repining. And there was little Bluemask to talk to, in the gloom before the dawn,—if she came true to his request.

As he had scarcely slept the night before, his slumber was now profound. He awoke with the startling fear that he had overslept his hour of departure. But the

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darkness at once reassured him. The sound of sobbing came to his ears. He started up. Near the entrance of the glove sat little Bluemask, her box beside her. As he saw no faint spots of light against the night, and as her sobbing was persistent, he concluded that her face was buried in her hands, and her hands were hidden upon her knees.

"What is it, little friend?" asked Belle-Isle.

"Oh, Norman, poor Old Norman!" sobbed the girl, "do not ask. Thou couldst not understand unless thou couldst creep backward forty years, and be young again."

"Well, lady, I can not only creep back that far, but fly, for there is no soul so sluggish with age that it has not the wings of memory to bear it to its young nest."

At first she made no response, but her sobbing ceased. Then she said, "What are my tears to thee?"

"Nay, it is only he who hath no tears of his own, that cannot feel the tears of other. Tell the old beggar thy sorrow, and the confidence of a pure sweet child will make him rich, though he hath not wherewith to buy his breakfast."

"Thou art a good man, Norman; I would we had light that I might look into thine honest face."

"By Bel — by my swo — by my rags, lady! I have a wish that would be a fit running mate to thine. For by this same hypothetical light, could I not feast my poor old eyes upon thy youth? Alas! We must be friends in the dark, but methinks I can lighten up this darkness not a little. Thy tears are for thy lover."

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“ Oh, oh, who hath told thee? ”

“ There is one tells me the secrets of others, lady. His name is Experience. Our duty is for our parents; our smiles, for our friends; our kind words, for strangers; but our tears for our lovers. He did not come last night. Morning threatened thee with his sword of light. So here thou camest to the old beggar, leaving a dead hope behind.” He heard her sobbing afresh. “ Let not my words startle thee, lady. There is no harm in thine old friend, — driven forth by his son to perish! ”

There was silence, broken at last by her voice. “ I pity thee for such a son. What can I say to cheer thy heart, when thou hast been driven forth to starve by the very one who should have cherished thee in thine old age! ”

“ Thou canst say nothing, lady, since thou hast driven thy father and mother forth from the pastures of thy heart, to starve for lack of love.”

“ Do not say that — do not, old man! Nay, they are not driven from my heart. Do I not love them as much as ever? When they learn how much I love Enrique — for now they will not believe I must be his wife or die, — they will see this is all for the best. Before long, we shall all be reunited, — all dwell in the same house. They think I am but a child, — that my love is a whim that will pass. Dear father, dear mother! They think of me as if I were still their little girl of nine or ten. But behold! love, like a magic key, has opened for me those huge doors that stand between dreams and life.

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I have been happy, my dreams have been sweet. But, oh, this new country that my feet have just entered ! Methinks love is the lost Eden of the soul, and God gives us one peep therein on our way through life ! ”

“ And pray, young maiden, whilst thou art peeping at the tame lions and gathering flowers without thorns, thinkest thou thy parents wait with a contented smile for a change in the play ? Is thy happiness worth the agony thy disappearance must have caused ? ”

“ Old Norman, why didst thou come here to make my life more bitter ? ” she cried out sharply.

“ Then was it bitter before ? How can that be ? They tell me pickles were sweeter than sugar, and vinegar more delicious than honey, when Eve set the table in the Garden of Eden. ‘ I must be Enrique’s wife or die ! ’ These are thy words. Thy parents will know all is for the best when they find out how delightful is thy love ! They think thou art a child, when, behold, thou art fifteen, if I do not mistake. Dost thou know what thy words mean — ‘ All will be for the best ’ ? It means all will be as thy hopes crave, though thou ride over loving hearts to thy goal. Thou thinkest when they find out how delightful is this Enrique, they will fall at his feet in raptures because he hath stolen their daughter from them ! Had he a golden tooth in every socket of his gums, he would be to them but a Spaniard, come here to tear liberty from their feeble grasp. Though he kiss softer than a south breeze and smile like an April day between its folds of tears, — what then ? Thy father does not want his soft kisses, nor thy mother his smiles.

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Nay, they want their beautiful child, the pride of their hearts! "

She began to sob. "Go, go away, Old Norman!" she said passionately.

Belle-Isle instantly changed his falsetto voice whose shrill mechanical notes had rendered his eloquence less effective than he could have wished. "I give thee choice between the old Norman and the young Norman, Bluemask! Thinkest thou I shall be more to thy liking with nigh fifty years peeled off my wrinkled skin?"

The girl screamed and sought to leap upon the ledge of stone that faced the opening.

"Hush, lady, hush!" cried Belle-Isle, seizing both her arms. "For the love of heaven compose thyself. If an outcry is raised, not only I, but thou, art lost. Think of us both, and keep silent for two. I swear by my faith, I will not harm thee. What! harm the little girl who trusted me, and fed me? Nay, Bluemask, I am as safe for thee as if I were any grandfather."

"Do not hold me! Do not come near me! Oh, traitor!"

"Then I release thee, but I cannot let thee go till we understand each other."

"I understand thee well enough," she said fiercely. "Thou hast acted a part to pry into my heart!"

"Nay, child, I knew thy story before thou hadst spoken a word. Come, lady, let us think well of each other; there will be plenty in the world to think ill!"

"Now I understand thy words well enough," she said

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haughtily. "Thou speakest against Enrique because he overthrew thee and trampled thee under foot, aha!"

"He is doubtless a fine soldier," said Belle-Isle calmly. "I do not hate him, far from it. Come, be friends with me, Anna, — for thus he called thee; I am only a day older than I was yesterday."

"I pray thee depart, or allow me to pass, señor."

Belle-Isle laughed. "Now, Bluemask, I think there was never such a child as thou, with so great a love in her little heart! When I came to thee with the tale that three nights ago I had been expelled from my son's house, thou didst believe!"

"Alas, yes! for why should I think thee such a base, callous make-believe? I trusted thee!"

"It was not because of a generous trusting soul that thou didst swallow so strange a tale, but because of thine inexperience, because thou canst not put two and two together, thereby making four, as I must tell thee. By my sword! thou art so full of thoughts of love, reason cannot wedge one slight idea into thy perception. Beware, beware, little girl! If I could deceive thee with a story so unreasonable, what may not this Enrique —"

"I will not hear thee, traitor! Nay, I will pass, or scream aloud. Do not mention him in comparison with thee! It is true I was too trusting to find fault with thy falsehood. But Enrique is not one to tempt credulity. One need not be worldly-wise to trust one who cannot deceive. Let me pass!"

"Not so, little girl, not so, inexperienced child. But I will go and leave thee. It is time for me to depart,



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when I am so misjudged. Thou wilt know better when thou art older."

"Either go, señor, or suffer me to leave thee."

"Nay, I am gone. But I shall see Enrique to-day. Come in the morning, and I will give thee true news."

"I will not come, señor."

"Very good, little girl. But if thou come I shall be waiting for thee."

Belle-Isle was unhappy when he gained the ground. It touched him sharply that he had left a pretty maiden behind, with an unkind thought for him. It had by no means been his intention to reveal his identity. How pleasant to have gone on indefinitely as the old beggar, while she poured forth her thoughts without reserve! By-and-by she would have come to hold his hand, perchance to stroke his aged head, to lay her palm upon his wrinkled cheek. This would have been pleasant, although she was not his lady. Still, any pretty girl is a delight — how good is God to put so many of them in the world! What sweet hours they might have passed together just before dawn! But he had been unable to resist the excitement of declaring himself. What an effect he had produced! Alas, that one cannot shock and at the same time please! Dearly as the Frenchman enjoyed being admired, it was still sweeter to startle his audience, — no matter how small that audience might be, — by a swift and unforeseen effect. Besides, he loved Rosamunda in so romantic a fashion, that her image interfered with the pleasure he might have found in Bluemask, or in Wilhelmina.

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Wilhelmina! What had become of her? Nay, he knew too well how she was immured in some dark cell of the Inquisition. He must see Rosamunda for the sake of his benefactress as well as for his love. He was pleased to be in love with Rosamunda, she was so beautiful, and their union seemed so improbable. But he felt that his love could not endure forever if he never saw her face again. He wished to nourish his passion, and it occurred to him with a curious little shock of surprise that it did not feel quite so desperate as formerly. The thought made him impatient for the light, when he could wander before the palace of Madame de Jasse and make an heroic effort to see the little soldier.

## *Chapter Fourteen*

### *GONZALVO'S REVENGE*

**W**HEN the day was well awake, Belle-Isle left the Great Square, thinking his appearance there could give Bluemask little pleasure in her present mental attitude.

The alms of a stranger supplied him with breakfast. The young man did not look upon his food as the gift of charity, but as the spoils of adventure. At a late hour he saw Gonzalvo leave the palace in which he had taken up his temporary abode. Belle-Isle sought to escape his attention, and his heart was light when the haughty Spaniard vanished from sight. Some time after, Rodrigo appeared upon the steps. Several Flemings were passing, and the soldier began to sing a ribald song, insulting the patriotic aspirations of the Netherlands. The Flemings hurried on with heavy scowls.

“Ay, frown away, my masters!” the soldier called after them. “Glower and fume, for it is all you can do. When we have pricked holes in the hearts of these Dutchmen, and carried off their wives and daughters, methinks you will purr more softly!”

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"It is well said," observed the Frenchman drawing near. "And pray, my hearty lad, canst not give an old man a dole of thy fortune?"

"I have no fortune, old man," replied Rodrigo, with a rough kindness. "We merry fellows of Castile are come hither to get our fortunes, and we have brought our bare backs to carry them the better."

"Yet I pray thee stead an old man who hath not had bite nor sup since the morning cock crowed derision at his hunger."

"What wouldst have, poor old wretch? My wages are overdue, and I have no more than my stomach can put away. Seek some of thy rich merchants and get of their wealth before we take them in hand, which shall not be long, God help us!"

"Nay, but worthy señor, there is a hidalgo within, one Enrique de Oviedo y Varrez, whose handkerchief I hold. Do, now, take me to him, that I may deliver this property, and so obtain a reward that may nourish my old bones a whit."

"For thy bones, old man, I will go seek the cavalier." Rodrigo entered the house. Belle-Isle turned carelessly about, and his eyes encountered those of a man watching him from a distant corner of the street. The man was Gonzalvo de Oviedo. The Spaniard knew he had been detected. Instead of advancing, however, he vanished around the corner. His look chilled the smile upon Belle-Isle's lips.

At last he saw Rodrigo returning, and by his side walked the little soldier, stately and cold of mien. The

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young man watched her as she came down the stairs. He wondered that all the world had not penetrated her disguise. How could those soldier's trappings hide the fact that she was a woman, magnificent in beauty and daring? He remembered, as she drew near, his fear, lest his love for her were fading. How absurd had been that thought! He felt that the house of his soul had been tightly closed during slow, dusty years, and that the sight of her had opened every door and window, letting the summer breezes sweep through his inmost being.

Rosamunda looked at him with eager intensity. She did not know what secret this old man had gleaned from finding her handkerchief. But she did not suffer her agitation to betray itself. She held out her hand quietly. "Where was it found?" she demanded. Then to Rodrigo who had hovered near, "Away!" The soldier drew back out of hearing with a grin at Belle-Isle over Rosamunda's shoulder.

"It was passing strange," said Belle-Isle in his cracked voice.

"Come with me," said the Spaniard. She led him into the house. Many were passing in the great hall. She drew him aside, to the embrasure of a window. Some glanced curiously at the old beggar. At the other side of the hall stood the Duke of Alva and the Count of Egmont.

"Come, come," Alva was saying in a loud voice, "give us a sample of this song thou sayest is so popular."

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"Nay, Alva," said Egmont with some confusion, "I fear it would give thee small comfort."

"Sayest so?" cried Alva with a sneer. "Speakest thus of the poetry of thine own land, Count? Nay, where is thy patriotism? Sing us a verse, an thou lovest me!"

Egmont dropped his head in much embarrassment, but he knew the request so arrogantly proffered was, in reality, a command. Therefore he sang, choosing the last stanza of the song as the least offensive. It was the song beginning, "Slaet op den tromele van dirre dom deyne." As every verse began with "Long live the Beggars!" the effect upon the Spanish soldiers who were listening was just what Alva had anticipated. They glowered at Egmont, rattled their swords, and muttered among themselves. Alva threw back his head and laughed loudly. He was thinking of the fate already prepared for a nobleman too high-spirited and loyal to read death in the eyes that watched his every motion.

In the meantime Rosamunda, taking advantage of the noise, demanded imperiously where her handkerchief had been found.

"Dost thou know," inquired the old beggar, "where a certain wooden glove hangs as a sign before a glover's on the Great Square? I mean a glove large enough to be used as a house; a glove wherein a maiden by the name of Bluemask might even pass her days; a glove that might shelter Belle-Isle by night. A glove in short —"

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"Oh, Beile-Isle!" she whispered in a choking voice, "I am lost!"

"Nay, sweet Rosamunda, never shall thy secret pass my lips, — I swear it, by Belle-Isle?"

"But, it is not that. Oh, why didst thou come! Look not behind thee, — my father watches us. Such eyes! my God, such a look! And I am his daughter!" Her face was white and set, and her eyes began to burn.

"I will never look behind me, lady, whilst thou standest in the van. Now what sort of a father is this, who hath such eyes because thou speakest to a poor old man?"

"He sees something besides an old man. But he shall not see me tremble. Go!" she waved him away.

"But my alms," said Belle-Isle, holding out his hand.

"True. It may deceive him." She handed him a gold ring. "Let no one see this, for it is too much, — except for the secret I thought to buy."

Belle-Isle raised his shrill voice. "Now God's benisons upon thy head, worthy señor!" He hobbled from the house, not seeing Gonzalvo. He dared not search the room with even a covert glance, lest the father suspect his intention. When he was without he breathed more freely.

"Now," he muttered, "I am done with this spot of the earth! Why did that spying worthy allow me to escape? He plays some deep play. He doth not drink from a shallow well, that Gonzalvo, — nay, he draweth deep! I have not wrought amiss, howbeit.



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Here is this gold ring. Rosamunda hath made most solemn oath to come to me whenever and wherever I demand it. I need but send this ring, and she will know I sent it. But by my sword! I forgot all about Wilhelmina and her friends." The young man stopped as if turned to stone by the recollection. "After all, there was scarce time. But I might have crowded the matter into her ear. As I live, I could think only of Rosamunda, while the wonder of her beauty filled every nook of my soul with rapture."

"Ho, old man," said a voice at his ear, "why standest thus agape?" The speaker was Rodrigo. "I have followed to give thee warning. Knowest Gonzalvo de Oviedo? I saw him cast a look upon thee wherein no blessing rode under cover!"

"Thou art a kind soul, señor, I thank thee. But see, does he not stand upon the upper portico? Ay, he watches us, and, as I live, I cannot tell which he scowls at more murderously, — thee or me!"

"The saints preserve me!" whispered Rodrigo, as he caught the look in Gonzalvo's black eyes. He turned away from Belle-Isle and sought an attitude of indifference. Belle-Isle hobbled around the corner, then tucked his staff under his arm, and made off at a smart pace.

"If only I had thought of Wilhelmina!" he reflected. "What a morning this has been! A meeting with my dear lady, eyes to eyes, and her voice in my ear; a suspicious father watching with eyes of hate; a bond between me and Rodrigo! If I had only said to Rosa-

## GONZALVO'S REVENGE

munda, 'Wilhelmina Janssen and her family are my intimate friends; do what thou canst in saving them from the stake!' I must adventure a letter to Rosamunda. Perchance she may have some power in saving the unfortunate girl. She is too large, poor Wilhelmina, and her one foot would cover two prints of Rosamunda's fairy slippers. Then she has such a clear, unabashed look out of her eyes, as if she thought herself a man and a comrade! But after all, there are French hearts in these Dutch bodies!"

"Hail, old man!" said a voice in his ear. Belle-Isle had reached another part of Brussels. He who addressed him was a man of about fifty, with a beard running under his chin and up each side of his face, leaving bare the chin and lips. His face was large and red, his form rotund and Dutch, while his person was pervaded by an indefinable air of prosperity and solid integrity.

"Hail to thee, worthy burgher," said Belle-Isle, "and may it please thee, I am a hungry man, your worship."

"It pleases me, for I may give thee pleasure," said the other. "Enter thou my house, and thou shalt be fed."

He followed the man into a large house, and food was placed before him, while the benefactor and his wife looked on. The lady, whose hair had not yet begun to turn gray, was clearly not a Fleming. Belle-Isle noted in her face a familiar look. Had he seen her in France? Her form was slight and her manner graceful and dignified. She bore the look of sorrow, which was more legible in her refined features than in the round face of

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her husband. They waited in silence until the Frenchman rose from the table. Then the host said, "Come, rest within, old man."

"Nay," said Belle-Isle, who had been deeply perplexed by the lady's face, and by the burgher's unwonted kindness, "I must fare forth, kind gentles. Better for me had I taken thy charity at the door; for one smell of the inside of such a house makes me discontent with the barn wherein I pass my life."

"Hast thou no family, old man?" asked the lady.

"Only a son, fair dame, who hath driven me forth from the home I gave him."

The lady looked at her husband. "He will aid us," she said, "since he can understand our sorrow."

"Can it be," cried Belle-Isle, "that your son has proved ungrateful? Then indeed will I do all I can to bring you comfort; for those wounded by the same sword are made brothers."

"Blessings upon thee, old man!" cried the lady, seizing his hand. "We think thou canst aid us, indeed. Rich shall be thy reward in that case. Thy name!"

Belle-Isle reflected a moment and then answered, as he had answered Gonzalvo, "Effin Dijk Dirk."

"I am Josephine van der Loren; and this is my husband, Gerbrand. Our only child has been stolen from us by the foreigners. We know who have caused her abduction, — a Spanish knight, high in favor with Alva; he and his son have robbed us of our little Anna. Wilt thou not aid us, Effin? Wilt not bring comfort to my breaking heart?"

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"Trust me, lady. Is the knight a certain Gonzalvo de Oviedo y Varrez? And is the son Enrique?"

"It is they!" exclaimed Gerbrand. "What canst thou tell us, dear old man? See, my wife faints!"

"No, no," cried Josephine, who had fallen upon her knees before Belle-Isle, and who now grasped his hands. "No, I live to hear the truth. What has happened?"

"There is little I can tell thee, fair lady. Do not kneel to the old beggar. I heard those two speaking in whispers, and I divined they had kidnapped some maiden. I knew not whom. Thy words have supplied the break in the history. Yes, it is Gonzalvo, in truth."

"And where have they taken her, good Effin? What have they done with her? — my God!"

"Fear nothing. Enrique hath no thought that stops a pace short of marriage. They delay to gain her consent."

"But where have they imprisoned her?"

"That I did not learn. For as I listened, being of a mighty curious disposition, with a taste for such quaint histories, Gonzalvo faced about and discovered me, and knew I had thirsty ears. So I was cast out of the place without a 'By God's leave, old man!'"

"Alas!" she cried.

"Yet this is better than we hoped," said Gerbrand. "I saw thee loitering before that accursed nest of Spaniards; I thought to employ thee to steal this secret from Gonzalvo."

"How knowest thou of my honesty, good sir?"

"Is not poverty a badge of honesty!"

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"Effin, good Effin," said the lady, "wilt not go thither and find out where they have dragged our little darling, our one ewe lamb? Our wealth shall be thine, if thou canst bring back our stolen treasure. She had such a way, Effin, of throwing her arm gayly about my neck, and calling me her sweetheart."

"Ay," said Gerbrand gloomily, "but that was before she knew there was a difference between men and women."

"Yet," said the mother eagerly, "she would never have deserted us willingly. Could she have left her father and mother to die of broken hearts, for an enemy to her country? Is this any less her country because I am a Frenchwoman?"

"Josephine, what is a maiden's country, in comparison with her first love? Didst leave thy France to be my wife?"

"Ay, but I did not desert my parents. But what do we say? How can we even hint at our little Anna's wantonly crushing all hope out of our lives? Effin says she was stolen, and we knew it before he spoke. Our little girl! How she used to race through the house, and sing and laugh because she was young!"

"Ay," said Gerbrand, "but all that came to an end when she met the Spaniard. There was no laughing and no racing after that!"

A servant appeared at the door and announced Gonzalvo de Oviedo y Varrez. Belle-Isle looked quickly at Josephine. "If he find me here," he whispered, "I am lost, and so is thy hope!"

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"Quick!" answered the lady. "Let us within this closet. Oh, I cannot look into his face! Oh, my husband, be careful, be calm, be cunning!"

They heard the heavy tread of the Spaniard, who, impatient of delay, had followed the servant. Josephine had scarcely closed the closet-door upon herself and the beggar, when Gonzalvo entered the room. He found Gerbrand van der Loren standing solemnly by the window, nervously feeling his fringe of whisker. The new comer gave a swift glance toward the table, from which the servants had already removed the dishes. He looked rapidly about the room, then faced the Fleming coldly.

"So we are alone, it seems," he said suspiciously.

"Ay, we are alone, as it pleases thee to observe," said Gerbrand. "Rest content, if contentment may be breathed in this unhappy home."

"Gerbrand van der Loren," said Gonzalvo, not heeding him and speaking bluntly, even savagely, "that girl of thine has run off to my son, which puts me in a delicate position, seeing that thou hast for many years been my enemy. Here she comes in the dead of night, crying to my son to take her in, ere she die of love! I only learned the thing this day, and come to thee to clear myself of thy suspicions."

"Indeed, my lord," said Gerbrand in a restrained voice, "I know full well she was abducted, and can only wonder at thy motive in deceiving me."

The Spaniard's face became dark with passion, but he bit his lip. "I tell thee the truth, Gerbrand. And what is more, I come to make what restitution I may. If thou

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wilt take back the girl, thou shalt have her this very night."

"Is it true, Gonzalvo? What! thou hast a father's heart, after all? Shall I indeed have my Anna safe?"

"Thou shalt have her — if thou wilt receive her as she is, Gerbrand."

"I have no fear of my little Anna!"

"Very well. Then thou shalt have her, though my son tear his hair in rage at our spoiling his pretty pleasure. But methinks he has grown somewhat weary of her devotion. It may be he will rejoice to have her taken away, since he hath not the heart to drive her into the street."

"I ask no more, señor, than that he open the door of her cage and suffer her to escape."

Gonzalvo laughed cruelly. "Thou blind fool!" he cried out, as much in anger, it appeared to Belle-Isle, as in derision. "Dost thou not know, Van der Loren, that that girl of thine is in love with my Enrique?"

"I know, señor, that she is but a mere child, whose fancy has been dazzled by the brilliancy of Alva's court. But whatever her fancy, why would she throw aside her father and mother as if we were old garments which had cherished her in the cold, but for which she thinks to have no need, having entered into the warmth of love? Nay, nay, Gonzalvo, thou art come to rack me with suspicions of hell, which shall not enter my breast, however keen thy darts."

"In a word, then," said Gonzalvo with a sneer, "thou thinkest my son and I have carried her off by force?"



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"I know this to be the truth, señor. But thou hast given me a hope, for thy promise is passed, that to-night I shall have back my child."

"If thou wilt take her," interposed Gonzalvo.

"I will take her," returned Gerbrand coldly, that he might hide his passion.

Gonzalvo laughed. "Perchance thou wonderest why I should trouble myself to restore to thee thy ruined girl. But I have in memory thy first child, also a girl, and thy unjust suspicion that it was I who stole her from thee in her infancy."

"Señor, I have never changed that suspicion," said Gerbrand, almost in a whisper.

"Yet I knew nothing of that infant's fate, old man. Thou hast been most unfortunate, by St. James of Compostella! The first babe is snatched from its parents, the second runs away when old enough! It seems here was an unlucky marriage when Gerbrand van der Loren and Josephine de Montresor entwined their flags over one hearth! Perhaps if that lady of France had thought better of her opportunity, Gonzalvo de Oviedo y Varrez would not have been the man he is to-day."

"Señor," said Gerbrand, "where shall I find my daughter, to-night?"

"At ten I will come and conduct thee to her. I shall prove to thee beyond the hope of doubting that this girl, throwing all sense of honor to the winds, flew to my son of her own choice: that she abides with him willingly; that only by force will she suffer herself to be torn

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from his arms. Ay, Van der Loren, I speak the truth upon my sacred honor!"

From the closet came the sound of shrill laughter. The door was thrown open, and Josephine van der Loren entered the room, still laughing hysterically. Belle-Isle was thrilled by the sound of hollow mirth. He chanced to stand in the end of the closet next the Spaniard, hence his person was hidden, although the door stood open.

"So we were not alone, after all," said Gonzalvo, staring at the lady insolently.

Josephine advanced toward him still laughing. "Thy honor!" she cried. "That was very good, señor. Pray proceed, señor, — thy sacred honor!"

"This is a mad woman!" said Gonzalvo between his teeth, while the furious blood dyed his bronze cheeks. "Take her away, Gerbrand, for though she is a woman — And this is pretty Josephine de Montresor!" he continued, his tone changing from anger to scorn. "This is the pretty girl I kissed in Paris on that night of the grand fête. Poor Josephine, — quite mad!"

"Josephine," said Gerbrand warningly, "remember our only hope hangs upon his favor."

"Thou canst stand there," cried the lady, turning upon her husband with burning eyes, "and hear him traduce our only child. Thou canst remember that it was he who stole our babe from us, twenty years ago. Thou canst listen while he vilifies our sweet Anna, helpless in his power. Thou canst look gravely upon the

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floor when he speaks of his honor. But it makes me laugh!"

"Josephine, Josephine!" her husband appealed. "If he is angered, how shall we ever find our little one?"

"He says she left of her free will," continued the mother wildly, advancing toward Gonzalvo. "He calls her a ruined girl, and says nothing but force can tear her from the arms of that devil, his son; and God does not strike him to the earth. But God knows the mother is here to defend the little girl, and to maintain her honor. But why do I speak of him? What cares he for words of truth? Nay, this is the mother's word he can understand!" As she spoke, her clenched fist smote him upon the mouth.

"God's wounds!" cried Gonzalvo, grasping her arm, while the blood oozed from his lip. Gerbrand started forward.

"Release her arm!" he cried hoarsely, feeling for the sword that was not there.

"Thus, thus the mother answers that false mouth!" cried Josephine, struggling madly, that she might strike him again.

Gonzalvo held both her wrists, and stared into her face with bloodshot eyes, while he caught his breath. Suddenly he flung her from him into the arms of the approaching husband. His thin lips were tightened at the corners, and drawn back from the gleaming teeth.

"You have ruined all," Gerbrand panted to his wife, as she clung to him, quivering.

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For a while the silence in the room was terrible. Belle-Isle, whose hand convulsively grasped his beggar's staff, inclined his ear that he might not lose a word. His blood danced with delirious excitement. Would it be necessary for him to spring forth without his sword, to oppose the father of Rosamunda?

Gonzalvo was the next to speak. His voice still shook with fury, but the master's iron will reduced it almost to a whisper. "At ten to-night, Van der Loren," he said, "come to the Great Square. I will be waiting to take thee to thy daughter."

"I shall be there," said Gerbrand eagerly.

The Spaniard strode to the door, then added, "After thou hast seen her — I know thee, Van der Loren — thou wilt never wish to see her again. For this blow upon my lips, let that be my satisfaction." With these words he left them.

Belle-Isle hobbled into the room.

"Have no fear," said the Frenchman. "I know thy child is as pure as when last she stood in this room. Have I not overheard father and son? Do I not know their plots? I go now to watch this Gonzalvo, this Enrique. Trust the old beggar, he is your friend, and you might have a worse!"

They almost overpowered him with their gratitude. Money was pressed into his reluctant hands, — he cared nothing for money when he had no wants to supply. Belle-Isle departed, feeling that Bluemask was safe enough during the day.

In the afternoon as the young man hobbled along a

## GONZALVO'S REVENGE

seldom used passway, he suddenly came upon Rodrigo. Here was his opportunity to do what he could for Wilhelmina. "Stay, kind warrior," he said in his falsetto, "Wilt not carry a note from the old beggar to Señor Enrique de Oviedo?"

"A note!" exclaimed Rodrigo with a great oath born of his good humor. "Do beggars of Brussels send notes to grandees?"

"Ay, an they find so good a messenger! Here is money, for didst not obtain money for me this morning, in leading me to the Spaniard?"

"I will not take thy money, old man. But where is this note?"

"It is in my brain, good señor, but it shall stream through my fingers upon paper."

"Then write, old man. Ah! the look his father cast upon thee would make a fish in any brook think himself stranded upon dry land!"

"Is it so?" said Belle-Isle, seating himself upon a step, and drawing a small brush, a paint-box, and a sheet of paper from his pocket. "Nay, he looked upon thee as if he thought thee a mistake God made whilst trying to fashion a man."

"Did he look at me so, indeed?" said Rodrigo uneasily. "Now, by our Lady of Loretto! methought I, also, spied this uneasy glimmer in his eyes."

Belle-Isle wrote, while Rodrigo read over his shoulder:

*"To Señor Enrique de Oviedo y Varrez, and I make bold to crave my lord's grace to have compassion upon one*

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*Hendrik Fanssen and his family, who be imprisoned by the Inquisition, for very pity to the poor old beggar who restored to thee thy handkerchief. For they be no accursed heretics, but blessed children of our Holy Church and loyal to the King."*

Rodrigo laughed. "Thinkest thou, poor old fool, that the Inquisition lets its mice go when they are between its claws?"

"Wilt take my note, good Rodrigo?"

"Well, well, why not? For after this señor recovered his handkerchief, he gave me much money. Mayhap he will reward me for this note. Farewell, old comrade; but dost indeed think Gonzalvo looked so at me?"

"Think no more on it, Rodrigo, only carry the note. Everything ends well in this world, Rodrigo; I have always found it so. After a hungry day comes a full stomach; after heart's pining, a pair of pretty arms; after much hating, the dagger. All ends well, — if not to thee, then to another."

When it grew dark, Belle-Isle resolved to be present, if possible, when Gonzalvo took Gerbrand to his daughter. It was a delicious September night. Seeking out-of-the-way streets, the young man sought the river and bathed, resolved to meet the night's adventure in his crimson doublet and flesh-colored hose. The moon would not rise till midnight, and as it grew toward the appointed hour, the night was intensely dark.

As he walked rapidly through a narrow street, not far from the spot where he had written his note to Rosamunda, he stumbled over an object that lay across the

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road. His hands, in seeking to break his fall, touched something white and cold. It was a man's hand. Belle-Isle felt the body lightly. Presently he discovered the hilt of a dagger, resting in the back of the corpse. Rodrigo had been stabbed from behind. Belle-Isle withdrew the weapon, and wiped it upon the soldier's cloak. "Poor Rodrigo!" he murmured, "he will never swear another oath, the kind old villain! I wonder if he delivered my note, or if Gonzalvo found it upon him. Poor Rodrigo! Well, everything ends well — if not for us, then for our enemies!"



## *Chapter Fifteen*

### *ROSAMUNDA PLAYS THE LOVER*

**I**T was nearly ten o'clock when the Frenchman, with cautious step, gained the Great Square of Brussels. In the shadow of the buildings it was impossible to determine if any one loitered upon the streets, and the young man ascended nimbly, secure from detection. Feeling his way with practised feet along the stone ledge, he entered his queer home, and hurriedly divested himself of his rags. Presently he was attired as he had been the night of Egmont's masquerade, even to the sword at his side. Then he emerged from the huge sign and, having gained the ledge, paused undecided. The silence was broken by the peal of bells; it was the hour of the appointment.

As he slipped noiselessly to the ground, he heard a man's approaching footsteps. The footsteps paused not far from him. Then a voice spoke, "I am here!" It was the voice of Gerbrand van der Loren.

There was no answer. Belle-Isle squeezed his form against the wall and waited. He heard Gerbrand breathing. He heard him mutter, "He will not come!" Then he raised his voice and said in a sharper tone, "I am here!"

## ROSAMUNDA PLAYS THE LOVER

"Hush, fool!" said another voice, close at hand. "Follow and make no sound, else she will elude us."

"She?"

"Ay, — thy daughter; she is near."

Gonzalvo led Gerbrand up the flight of stairs so familiar to the young man; he followed with light feet.

"A misstep will be thy ruin," Gonzalvo said in a harsh undertone. "Steady thyself with one hand against the wall. Feel the way with thy feet."

"I follow, though perchance into a deadly trap," said Gerbrand.

"Fool!" returned the Spaniard, "did I call thee hither to put thee into a trap, when I might have brought the trap to thee? Thou art a gallant climber, Van der Loren, to walk so nimbly in the dark to witness thy daughter's dishonor!"

"God preserve me until I hold her in my arms!" ejaculated the father.

Gonzalvo laughed softly. "Here is a window, old heretic," he said. "We enter here. No further words!"

Belle-Isle knew they had stopped before the linen-window where he had found Rosamunda's handkerchief. He heard the hinges creak; they left the window open, and he came after them without noise. His feet were upon a bare floor. He crept forward cautiously, fearing lest he stumble over an object in the darkness, and thus betray his presence. His hand was ever upon his sword, lest it give forth a warning. Gonzalvo and Gerbrand made scarcely any sound, but his intent ears enabled him to follow their unseen forms. Voices came to him,

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and caused his heart to leap. He turned a corner in a long and narrow hallway, and a streak of light met his gaze — a sharp white line, where a door failed to touch the floor. Half way up a round white eye looked at him unwinkingly, where the light streamed through a large keyhole. The voices on the other side of the door appeared careless of restraint.

Gonzalvo whispered to Gerbrand, "Listen first; look afterwards."

Belle-Isle heard an impatient motion, and then the hoarse whisper of the Fleming, "Release my arm!"

"Not now; wait," replied Gonzalvo, under his breath. "Listen, listen, listen, old fool; then thou shalt look thy fill!"

Belle-Isle was startled by a sudden sound near his feet, the sound of a falling object.

"Oh, Enrique!" cried a girl's voice from within, "what was that in the hall? We are discovered."

"No, Anna," said the voice of the little soldier, "have no fear, it is only an apple I brought thee, which I set upon a shelf as I entered. It has rolled to the floor. I will get it for thee. Abide here."

Belle-Isle, who had fled to the turning-point in the hall, peeped around the corner, and saw the door half-opened. Rosamunda in her soldier's disguise stepped out of the lighted room and walked toward Gonzalvo, who stood behind the door clutching Gerbrand's arm. Gonzalvo extended his arm, and Rosamunda's hand met his. Then the little soldier returned to the room, closing the door. The Frenchman crept

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closer, understanding that the sudden sound had been a signal agreed upon to warn Rosamunda of her father's presence.

"Here is the apple, sweet," said Rosamunda in a clear, distinct voice. "I found it where it had fallen."

"But why did it fall, Enrique?" asked Bluemask, with vague alarm still trembling in her voice.

"My step shook it from its place, Anna. Think no more of that. Who could find us here? The glover knows he would meet death the instant he betrayed us. Besides, it is to his interest to keep thy living here a secret, for he has now a steady income from a disused room. Every day thou art hidden away in thy snug retreat, and this room is open to whoever will enter. And every night do I not come to thee?"

"Not every night, dear Enrique. Ah, thou wast cruel last night! At first I thought, 'He will come early to-night, and we will sit through the golden hours telling each other's fortunes by the light of love!' But thou camest not, Enrique, and there were some hours lost that might have been such precious gains! And then I said, 'Still he will come, he will not fail me; we cannot begin at the first of our story, and slowly bring it forward to the breathless climax; we must begin with the climax itself, the "*I love thee, I adore thee. Wilt thou be mine?*"' But, oh, Enrique, it drew near the dawn! And then I said, 'He will come for one brief moment, just that a day may not perish; there will be no time for words; kisses must buy back the wasted hours!' And still thou camest not. And so the night was

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gone, Enrique, a night without one glimpse of thy face!"

"Poor little girl!" said Rosamunda. "But now we have a long, long night before us. Turn not thy face away, darling. I must love thee for two nights. What joy I should have missed, hadst thou not come to me of thine own free sweet choice, to be mine forever!"

"Yes, Enrique, what happiness might have never been! Oh, is it wrong to be so happy? But thou art my life, and without thee I would desire the grave. How strange that I may thus pass long hours with thee and never feel a fear! Enrique, I think there is no other man like thee, so true and noble. There is that in thee that makes me trust thee more than I trust myself."

"Sweet Anna! Well hast thou proved thy trust!"

"Yes, Enrique, I have left all for thee, a dear father, a loving mother, a happy home. And I was glad to slip from them in the night and come to thee, for thus I told thee in a language thou couldst never doubt, that I was wholly thine!"

"Precious little one! And so wast glad to come?"

"Glad? My heart leaped and thrilled, as if it were a burst of music, floating from the gates of Paradise. I know they grieve for me, my father, my mother. But I give this sorrow for thy priceless devotion. I pay all that I have, my heart and their grief. Now love me, Enrique, for what I have given up, and for my love of thee."

"Some day, Anna, thou shalt be my wife," said the little soldier.

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“Do I not know that, Enrique? I never doubt thee, and if I become impatient, I blame myself. I tell myself love is enough to-day; to-morrow, there will be a marriage. My poor father! When he forced me to go home that night of the masquerade, — ‘Thou shalt never see this Spaniard again,’ he said. The next morning he would have carried me, a heartbroken prisoner, to France. I slipped from the house at midnight, and came to thy palace. Have I told thee, sweetheart, how I many times threw before the stone struck thy window? I shall never forget thy face when thou sawest me standing all alone in the street. Enrique, Enrique! kiss me as thou didst that night, when we said farewell. And now I will kiss thee. Do not breathe, else thou wilt blow away my courage. Oh, Enrique, when thou art gone from me — But we have such nectar hours to drink, before the garish sun robs us of what is ours, — I mean the little secret that is between us two, all hidden from the world, — our golden love!”

“God’s fury!” cried Gerbrand, breaking from the grasp of the Spaniard, and rushing upon the door. He flung it open and burst into the room, closely followed by Gonzalvo. The little soldier sat upon a couch with Anna’s head resting upon the embroidered bosom of the uniform. Their arms were about each other. At the sudden tumult they started apart. Rosamunda leaped to her feet and drew her sword. Anna gave a wild scream. “Father!” she cried, with a white face. “My father!”

Gerbrand stood staring at them, a man frenzied by

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suspicion, shame, and agony. One glance fell upon the terror-stricken face of his daughter. Then he turned upon the other, his face purple with passion.

Anna sank upon her knees with clasped hands. "Father!"

"I have nothing to do with thee," gasped Gerbrand, not looking down. He sprang toward Rosamunda. He was unarmed, as became his class, but he rushed forward careless of the sword with which Rosamunda defended her person. Involuntarily she shrank back before the onslaught, until she stood in a corner of the room. Gerbrand rushed toward the couch, and lifted it from the floor apparently without exertion.

"Father, father," screamed Anna frantically, "do not kill him!" She struggled up from her knees.

These changes in the scene had taken place with such rapidity that Gonzalvo was unable to arrest the infuriated father. Now, however, he brushed Anna aside, and sprang between Gerbrand and Rosamunda. He turned upon the Fleming with flashing sword. He crouched forward with extended blade, to run his enemy through the heart. The next instant Gerbrand lifted the couch aloft, as if its weight had been as nothing, and hurled it at the Spaniard. With an oath, the latter recoiled and swerved to one side, but a corner of the couch struck him upon the head, and he fell to the floor as if dead.

With a furious and inarticulate cry, Gerbrand snatched up the sword that had fallen from Gonzalvo's hand. At the same time Anna fled to Rosamunda, and threw her



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arms about the impassive form. Rosamunda's face was white, and the sword she held quivered in her hand.

"Kill us both, father," cried Anna. "The blow that reaches Enrique must find its way through my body!"

Belle-Isle, who had entered the room unobserved, ran past Gerbrand, and took his place beside Rosamunda. There was a brief period of silence in the room, while Gerbrand, apparently unconscious of Belle-Isle's presence, glared at his daughter as she stood with her back to him, her face pressed to Rosamunda's face,—for they were of the same height.

Then Gerbrand threw Gonzalvo's sword upon the floor, and without a word turned and left the room. They heard him feeling his way up the hall; they knew when he climbed out of the window. When he was gone, the silence was unbroken. Belle-Isle stood with drawn sword, staring upon the motionless form of Gonzalvo. Rosamunda had turned her head to regard the young man, whose appearance had startled her out of her fear of the infuriated Fleming. The tension of the moment was broken by a low cry from Anna, as she slipped from the motionless form of the little soldier to the floor in a swoon.

## *Chapter Sixteen*

### *BELLE-ISLE'S FAREWELL TO ROSAMUNDA*

**B**ELLE-ISLE turned his eyes from the still form of Gonzalvo, and encountered the gaze of Rosamunda. He was white and stern as he looked into her face. He bent toward her slightly and said in a low voice :

“Rosamunda, I hate thee !”

She looked at him without replying, but her face changed, as though moved by sudden pain.

“I hate thee for thy part in this tragedy,” he said, and he could not keep his voice steady, for its tones quivered under the touch of strong emotions.

“Is he dead?” asked Rosamunda, pointing her sword towards her father.

“No, that sort lives,” replied the Frenchman.

“Then depart instantly, before he recovers,” she said, her manner changing to hurried alarm. “If he find thee here with me, Belle-Isle, my fate is upon me !”

“Thy fate ! Like father, like child ! A cruel, heartless father, — a cruel, heartless child. Oh, Rosamunda, that ever I could have thought to love thee !”

## BELLE-ISLE'S FAREWELL

"Hadst such a thought, Belle-Isle? Foolish thought!"

"Ay, monstrous thought! Love *thee*? A woman without instincts of a woman! A woman who can calmly look upon her father's prostrate form; who can stand sword in hand, while a maiden, all deceived and misguided, lies fainting at her feet." Belle-Isle knelt beside Anna van der Loren, and lifted the little head upon his knee.

"I pray thee leave us!" said Rosamunda pleadingly. "Thou canst do no good here, but much harm, if my father still lives."

"Thy father is no more to me than he is to thee," said the other roughly. "I will not leave poor little Bluemask to thy heartless caprice."

"Then I must go, Belle-Isle; if he recover let him think I fled from thee."

"I shall let him think the thoughts the devil sends him. Poor little Bluemask! Thou hast one friend. Foolish little Bluemask!"

Rosamunda left the room, but paused in the darkened hall, where she would be safe from the observation of Gonzalvo upon his recovery. She stood watching Belle-Isle, as he bent over the pale face of Anna. Her eyes burned.

"What a girlish face it is!" exclaimed Belle-Isle, as he stroked the cheek softly. "What an innocent, childish face, without a line of time or care! One's heart bleeds for such a guileless girl in such a world."

"Belle-Isle!" called Rosamunda in a low voice, "come

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hither into the hall that I may tell thee that which thou shouldst know."

"Little Bluemask!" continued the Frenchman dreamily. "Nay, it is little Whitemask, now. For the mask of sleep hides the mask of love and the lips of passion."

"Belle-Isle!" called Rosamunda softly, "wilt thou not come to me?"

"No, Rosamunda, never again, never again! When I look upon this little creature, I remember how with malicious fingers thou didst thrust thy hand into her inmost heart and play upon those strings that would have lain untouched for years,—for see: she is but a child! But thou shalt never harm her again. No, Rosamunda, I swear it by Belle-Isle!" he cried, lifting his head, and darting toward the dusky form a look that scintillated in his fierce indignation.

"Belle-Isle!" cried Rosamunda, holding out one hand toward him, which the light just tipped upon the fingers.

"To me, youth and innocence are sacred," cried the Frenchman. "I could almost pray she might never wake to learn thine infamy!"

Rosamunda darted into the room and stood before Belle-Isle.

"She must not learn the truth. Thou hast given thy solemn, sacred vow to keep my secret. Thou canst not tell her what I am."

"I say thou shalt deceive her no longer," cried Belle-Isle.





“ ‘ Ob, Belle-Isle, but I also am a woman’ ”

## BELLE-ISLE'S FAREWELL

"But thou canst not betray me, Belle-Isle; thou canst not tell her the truth. Thou canst not tell her parents. Thou art bound!"

"True, Enrique," said the young man with an intonation of scorn upon the assumed name. "Then be thou Enrique to the end, but thou shalt play with the sacred fire in this poor body no longer!"

"Belle-Isle, thou knowest why I have acted this part, — to save my life and honor."

"Thou saidst so, Enrique. But does one buy his own honor by the purchase of another's dishonor? Hast thou not dishonored this child in the thought of her parents? And I cannot tell them the precious truth that she is spotless. Better thine honor had perished, better thou hadst died, than thus cloak so pure a child in infamy."

"Oh, Belle-Isle, but I also am a woman!" cried Rosamunda wildly. His long cloak had fallen upon the floor at his excited entrance. Rosamunda caught it up, and wrapped it about her, hiding her soldier's uniform. It came below her knees, and its peach-color set off her dark, proud beauty in a manner almost startling. The transformation was so complete, so charming, Belle-Isle stared in reluctant admiration. Before he had recovered from the trance into which her marvellous loveliness had thrown him, a groan broke from the white lips of Gonzalvo. Rosamunda clasped her hands in entreaty, and looked at the Frenchman with imploring eyes. He realized that her safety depended upon his absence. His fierce anger partially subsided; he could feel pity for so beautiful a maiden with so savage a father.



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He rose softly, and, lifting the still unconscious form of Bluemask, slipped from the room. When he gained the hall, he gave one glance backward. Rosamunda had hidden the cloak and stood with downcast face. Gonzalvo was moving uneasily, and one hand had been lifted to his head where Gerbrand had inflicted the wound. Leaving them together, suspicion ever in the father's heart, fear ever in the child's, Belle-Isle carried the light form of Anna van der Loren to the linen-window. Resting her weight upon the sill, he gained the stone ledge, then took up her slender body, and moving cautiously and with great peril, skirted the face of the building until he reached the head of the stairs that led down into the Great Square. Feeling for each step, for the moon had not yet risen, he descended to the ground. Breathing rapidly from his unwonted burden, but still feeling strong enough to bear her farther, he entered the first street that led from the Square, as uncertain of his plans for the future as he was conscious of the delightful romance of the present.

## *Chapter Seventeen*

### *LITTLE BLUEMASK IS UNDECEIVED*

**W**HEN Belle-Isle reached a place where two brick buildings came together, leaving between them a passway of a few feet in width, he paused with his burden. The narrow passage appeared as a black line against the gloom, reaching from the rude pavement to the sky. He hesitated a moment, while his breath came with vehemence, for he had been greatly taxed by the continuance of the flight. He staggered into the alley, and as he pressed his way along one side, Bluemask's feet occasionally rubbed against the opposite wall. When he had proceeded some distance, growing ever weaker, till it seemed his arms must drop the little form which at first had appeared so light, he came to some steps at the rear of an imposing building. The steps led out of the passage upon a wooden platform before the door. Belle-Isle placed the girl upon the platform. Then he seated himself beside her, to regain his breath. At the same time he heard her sigh, then move her arm. Suddenly her voice startled him. "Enrique!"

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"Thou art on thy way home," said Belle-Isle gently.

He heard her sit up and feel upon the floor. "Where is the light, Enrique?" she asked softly. "Oh,— did my father,— have I been asleep?" She caught his arm.

"It was a swoon," he said. She dropped his arm with a cry of terror, which scarcely rose above a whisper. "Who art thou? Enrique! Enrique!" Her words died away in her throat, dry with fear.

"Little Bluemask, have no fear of me,— I am Norman, thy Crimsondoublet. Listen: I will tell thee everything."

"Norman!" she echoed, rising wildly. "But where is Enrique? What place is this?" She started forward, and stumbled upon the steps. He caught her.

"Little girl, sit down till I can tell thee. Thou hast been with me in the wooden glove, and thou knowest thou canst trust Old Norman,— or Young Norman, as it pleases thee. I am either, or both. Now wilt thou listen quietly, or make an outcry and bring the Spaniards hither?"

"Oh, where is Enrique?" she moaned.

"Child, child, canst thou not be prudent? Enrique is as safe as the North Pole."

"Thou art his enemy, Crimsondoublet; thou wilt not tell me the truth. He has been injured! I must find him, and if he is dead, die upon his bosom."

"He is not my enemy, but my friend. Thou shalt not go forth upon this quest of dying upon the bosom of any man. Sit down, child, for I am a man who

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will have his way. Obey like a good child, or like a naughty one as thou wilt. But from here thou stirrest not till I have told thee the truth concerning this Enrique."

"I shall cry out, traitor!"

"An thou make the attempt, I shall clap my hand over that innocent mouth that knows so many words of love."

"I shall believe not one word against Enrique."

"That thou believe is naught to me, damsel; that thou shalt at least hear the truth is something. Now I would I had been thy father to keep thy person under some lock and key. What! So fragile a case containing so precious a jewel, thrown out into the streets at midnight! Oh, thou ungrateful daughter, to trample under foot the lifetime of devotion which too kind parents lavished upon thee, and to take in exchange the kisses of a Spaniard who hates thy parents and thy country! There is but one excuse for thee, thy youth. Thou holdest it, a talisman from heaven, against the disdain that otherwise I should feel."

"Thou dardest speak thus to me because I am unprotected," she said in a choking voice. "But I endure everything to learn what has happened to Enrique!"

"Ay, to Enrique? What has happened to thy father is nothing!" he returned.

"My father? Then it is no dream after all? Oh, I saved Enrique! I threw my body between them. Tell me again he is safe."

"Ay, little fool, he is safe. Bluemask, dost thou

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know thou drivest me to hate thee? God knows I yearn to think well of every pretty lady. For what is beauty but a call for love?"

"I crave thy hatred, señor. And I have all a woman's scorn for thee and thy words!"

"And yet thou art so young! And yet they love thee so tenderly,—that father and mother! And thou hast all a woman's scorn for me, because I speak of them! Here is small argument for marriage, by Belle-Isle!"

"Misjudge me,—what do I care for thy thought? My father and mother are dear to me, and I weep through the day when I think of them. But at night I forget them in a greater life into which I have been plunged. Are thy saints dear to thee, Norman? He is my saint on earth, Enrique de Oviedo; he is my shrine on whose fair soul I lay my prayers to God."

"I proceed with my tale, child, but as touching Belle-Isle, he is no saint; though I know not but one day he may be canonized for this night's work. Know, then, thou poor fledgling, with the keen pain of growth in thy soul which thou thinkest to be love, know this,—that the father of Enrique has for twenty years been the sworn enemy of thy poor forsaken father. It was this Gonzalvo de Oviedo who stole from thy parents their first babe,—that sister of thine whom thou never hadst the joy to know. Reflect, Bluemask; didst never hear thy parents mention the Spaniard's accursed name with whispered loathing?"

She gave a low cry. "Gonzalvo!" she repeated. "Gonzalvo de Oviedo! Now I know where I had

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heard that name. It was in my infancy, for they never speak of my abducted sister. I knew, I knew —" Her voice broke off in confused thought.

"Yes, he is that villain. But his hatred was not gratified. What ocean's bounds are wide enough to contain the floods of hate? He found thy parents had in some degree forgotten their first-born, that in thee they sought a healing for their wounds. Ay, thou wert to them that medicinal touch which love lays upon the burning wound of sorrow. And so he said to himself, — I speak of this Gonzalvo, — 'Behold, their hearts are healing; I must break them anew!' So he threw his son in thy path, to win thee with soft words away from those thou wert born to comfort. Then yesterday he sought out Gerbrand van der Loren. I was there as the old beggar and I heard everything. He told Gerbrand and thy mother that thou hadst run away from them of thine own accord, that thou and Enrique were living together. They would not believe. Thy mother struck him in the mouth, — a righteous blow! Gonzalvo told Gerbrand he would take him to the proof. I followed them. We, in the hall, heard thy words of love. When Enrique said the apple had fallen, — it was but a signal from Gonzalvo to prompt Enrique to draw confessions from thy breast. At the sound, dost remember how Enrique came out into the hall! He went straight to Gonzalvo, who handed him the apple that had never been dropped. It was all a plot. We heard thee tell how thou hadst run gladly from thy mother's nest, and more we heard, till poor Gerbrand

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could not endure his shame. He rushed in upon you. He would have slain Enrique, but thou wert between. I saw Gerbrand look upon thee, as one looks upon the dead. He left thee forever. Thou didst fall fainting at Enrique's feet. Did he stoop to raise thee up? Nay, what cared he for thee? The play was ended. Fierce with anger at thy treatment, I carried thee from those conspirators. Enrique watched me; he did not care. He had no more use for the little fool who had wrecked so much for a dream of happiness! He let me have thee, as he might have thrown to a varlet a cast-off garment. He was done with thee! Gerbrand was convinced of thine infamy; Gonzalvo had his revenge; Enrique was ready for a new play."

Belle-Isle had spoken in a passionate undertone, his voice, flexible and southern, changing in a marvellous manner to suit his mood, — now fierce and powerful in his denunciation of Enrique, now scornful in its treatment of Anna's childish trust. But when he spoke of Gerbrand, it was as if the wounded pride and agonized despair of the father had found utterance. In truth, the Frenchman felt each emotion to the depth of his soul, and each none the less because it so swiftly gave place to another. She understood his words, for her attention was profound; but she understood even better that which spoke to her without words. Conviction often hides itself in the words that seek to dress it forth; but there are certain vibrant notes of the human voice that cause corresponding chords in him who listens to answer back the harmony of faith. His man-



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ner compelled belief, and what she heard crystallized the fears that had often beset her. She had always inwardly shrunk from Gonzalvo's eyes. If Enrique had really loved her, would he have suffered this Norman to carry her away? It was a part of the plot that began with the abduction of her infant sister.

Anna began to weep, and presently she was unable to stifle her sobs. Belle-Isle made no motion, uttered no word. Her grief became more audible. The moments passed, but she could not control herself. The expression of her anguish had in it the quivering accent of a child who for the time finds comfort not even in tears. It was a pitiful voice, and his heart ached. Sometimes a little "Oh!" would be prolonged below the breath, as if all her despair were seeking to crowd itself into that one word, which may express any emotion of the soul. But that unconscious exclamation would smite upon her ears, and render her conscious of the misery it sounded, and it then would be broken by heavy sobs, as if to listen to the voice of her own grief were more than she could bear.

At last the young man found the situation intolerable. "Do not, do not," he murmured. "All is not hopeless, little Bluemask. Listen, child!"

There came to them the sound of feet. She involuntarily checked her sobs, realizing how much safer she was with Belle-Isle than she might be with another. Two persons entered the narrow alley, and advanced slowly. Suddenly Belle-Isle grasped Anna's wrist warningly. He had recognized their voices.

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"Of course I am sure," said one. "I have often gone this way, though never with such a dizzy head. There is a physician on the next street." The speaker was Gonzalvo.

"I pray the saints we may soon come to him," said the weary voice of Rosamunda.

"Oh!" said Gonzalvo mockingly. "Oh, ho, my son! And is my weight so heavy when I lean but one hand upon thy shoulder? Come, Enrique, be a man!"

Rosamunda did not answer. Slowly they came forward, till they were opposite the recess where sat Anna and Belle-Isle with bated breath. Their feet stopped, and Gonzalvo panted.

"By our Lady, Enrique, thy father is almost spent! Let me breathe a space." There was a pause. "And so the little fool ran away after her father?" he presently continued.

"She left when she had lain a long time in a swoon," said Rosamunda.

"Ah, ah! And didst thou kiss her back to consciousness, thou dog?" he said with a rude laugh.

"No, father, I did not touch her, after she had fallen."

"Well, there was no need. We had finished our use for the simpleton. One thing is certain, she will never go into her father's house again! He would strike her to the earth before he would take her hand in his!"

"I am glad we are done with her," said Rosamunda.

"No doubt," he cried savagely. "Thou art ever an obstacle! When thou obeyest my will, it is because thou

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darest not disobey. Thou never enterest into my little plans with thy heart!"

"Father!" she exclaimed in a trembling voice. "Shall we not go on? It is so dark."

"Ay, it is dark, but is not thy father with thee?" He laughed. "And thou art sick of this sweet little Anna van der Loren, ay, son?"

"Father, I was never asked to do so hard a thing as to make love to her," said the other.

"By our Lady!" cried Gonzalvo, "it suits my revenge that she should be unharmed while her parents think her ruined. Every time I think of that, my sweet revenge twitches a year off my shoulder. Let us on to the physician. My head spins and whirls. A curse upon him and his proud Josephine."

They passed up the alley, and it was not until the echo of their slow tread died away that Belle-Isle spoke. "Little Bluemask, wilt thou not go with me back to thy father's house?"

"Ay, Norman, I will go," she said in a voice singularly steady though lifeless.

He did not know what to say to her, and after waiting a moment in the vain hope that the right words might come, he took her hand and led her away. They traversed street after street. He longed to look into her face, and read what emotion was written there; but it seemed to be their fate that they should ever continue friends in the dark.

At last they stood before the house of Van der Loren. Belle-Isle knocked loudly at the door. The echoes of

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the blow came back sharply from the end of the deserted street. He knocked again, this time with a long continued effort. Somewhere a bolt was drawn. Then a small gate opened that led into a covered path at the side of the house.

"Is that Hulst Filips?" asked Anna in the same deadened tone which had smote upon Belle-Isle's heart.

"Ay, it is Hulst Filips," said a surly voice; "it is Hulst Filips, that is who it is."

"Hasten to open the door to us, Hulst," said the girl.

"Nor neither will I open any door to any one this night," said Hulst Filips, whose fat person was dimly outlined against the darkness of the covered path. "So away with thee!"

Anna now spoke with sharp sternness: "Hulst, dost not know my voice? Go call my father!"

"I must needs have a long voice to reach him," said the gate-keeper, "if Gerbrand van der Loren is the man thou art fathering. For he and the mistress took coach an hour ago, and made off with the wind's speed, saying they would look upon Brussels no more in the body!"

Anna's voice now showed a sudden agitation. "Oh, Hulst, what mean these words? Where is my father?"

"Now here is some mistake," said Hulst Filips, "for when the master departed, he said to me, 'Filips,' — these were his words, Gerbrand's words, — 'Filips, thou hast been my faithful seneschal,' said he; 'I leave everything in thy care until,' said he, 'I send for them. Thou mayest think that I am leaving behind me a daughter,' said he; 'but,' — these be still his words, 'I have no

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daughter.' I said unto him, 'I thought —' said I, and then he said again, 'I have no daughter.' And he lashed the horses to a frenzy, and away they whirled through the night, I know not whither. Now I know thou art that Anna that once lived here. But as thou art not his daughter, as I had once thought, I have naught to say to thee but that I hope God may send thee a good night, and so no more from Hulst Filips." Whereupon the iron gate clanged to, and the seneschal was gone. Again silence reigned in the street.

Belle-Isle, realizing in some degree what must be the child's emotions, — he ever thought of her as of a child, — bowed his head in some embarrassment. At last he came to a sudden resolution. "Little Blue-mask!" he said. There was no answer. He looked softly about. She was gone.

The moon was just rising, and it whitened the roof of Gerbrand's deserted house. A dark form flitted along the opposite side of the road, and darted into the first cross street. It was Anna, fleeing from Belle-Isle. Whither? With sudden fear the Frenchman bounded after her. As he gained the mouth of the side street, he saw her disappearing into another thoroughfare.

Suddenly she stopped, and he slipped into a doorway lest she learn that she were followed. She had been checked by a band of Spanish soldiers who were passing along a road at right angles to the one in which she crouched. They bore torches and were singing rough songs in ridicule of the timid Netherlanders. "They are all heretics, all, all," they were singing. They bore

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a prisoner in their midst, a woman, whose shrill voice rose above their carousal. She was pleading for mercy. They were furious from drink and mad in the license Alva accorded them. They flashed into sight, then vanished, the glow of their torches slowly dying away.

Anna continued her flight, running as if for her life. And so she came to the river, upon whose surface sparkled a wrinkled moon. As if she had that to do which would not admit of reflection or delay, she leaped upon a rattling wharf, the private property of a wealthy burgher, and with two bounds gained its edge. Then with another leap she rose in the full silver light, and her form struck the surface of the water with a heavy splash that sent the water rippling against the wharf. Belle-Isle, guessing her intention, had run forward, but he had been too late. When he reached the wharf, her head had vanished, while over the spot where she had disappeared, the wrinkled moon danced on the troubled tide.

## *Chapter Eighteen*

### *BELLE-ISLE PREPARES FOR ADVENTURES*

**B**ELLE-ISLE placed upon the wharf his sword and purse, then sprang into the river. Anna came to the surface, and her arms caught him in a despairing embrace, instinct seeking to save the life her mind had sought to destroy. She was half-conscious when he drew her upon the wharf. She quickly revived, and shuddered from the cold. The Frenchman, as he replaced his sword and purse, clenched his teeth to prevent them from chattering unheroically.

"Oh, I am so cold!" shivered the girl. "What shall I do?" Her voice quavered childishly.

"Come," said Belle-Isle putting his arm about her. "I will take thee to an inn. Walk briskly; that will be of some avail." She did not seek to draw away. "Anna van der Loren," said the young man solemnly, as they almost ran down the street, "thou wouldst have thrown thy life away. To thee it was nothing, but to me it was worth the risk of my own."

"Why should I wish to live?" she shivered.

"Anna," said Belle-Isle, "there is a worse world than this!" In his many wanderings through Brussels, the



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Frenchman had come to learn the city well. It was not long before he stopped at a little inn near the city wall. He beat upon the door with the resounding knocker. "What will they think?" she asked suddenly.

"What they please," said Belle-Isle.

The door was opened by an unkempt, yawning man, who had been sleeping upon a heap of straw. He bore some of his bedding in his hair. They entered a large room, where a bed of dusky coals was sinking to ashes in a huge fireplace.

"The landlord!" said Belle-Isle in Spanish.

"He is a-bed," mumbled the sleeping night-watch.

"Fetch him!" said the Frenchman fiercely. The man slunk from the room. Belle-Isle placed Anna upon a settle before the hearth, and rattled his sword impatiently. It was a long time before the landlord appeared, hastily dressed, and pale from apprehension. He held by the arm the disreputable night-watch, as if to reinforce his fleeing courage.

"Fellow," said Belle-Isle, striding up to him, "give this lady a room, and a change of woman's dress and be quick for thy life! Hast no maid? Rouse her, rouse her, or I will go drag her in by her tangled locks. Quick! quick! Stop, stop! Bring me a change of clothes, and I will dress beside this hearth. Stir up the fire. Have in a huge roaring backlog to my comfort. Stop! Fetch me a robe,—anything till my clothes can be dried. Now go! Nay, wait. How many accursed heretics hast thou in this foul rendezvous?"

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"Not one, good master, not one," said the terrified landlord, clinging desperately to his servant.

"What! not one?" roared Belle-Isle, advancing upon him. "Belike thou art thyself a doomed Calvinist, or Lutheran, or a renegade Anabaptist, thou liverless worm! Why dost stand like a ghost while we freeze? Have I not wherewith to buy thy service?" With a magnificent gesture he flung a coin upon the floor, thereby emptying his purse. "Think thyself lucky to have money instead of the Inquisition!" he cried waving his sword.

The servant was as panic-stricken as his master. The landlord eyed the coin with a loving eye, and stooped to pick it up, although the terrible Spaniard froze his blood with that eagle glance. To fortify his resolution, he still clutched the night-watch's arm in an iron grasp, while with the other hand he reached for the money. Unluckily at this moment Belle-Isle waved his sword in a manner so blood curdling that the servant made a dash for the door. This unexpected movement threw the landlord flat upon his back, while his heavy fall brought his servant tumbling down on top of his rotund body. They scrambled together with much entanglement of leg and arm. "By the foul fiend!" shouted Belle-Isle, rushing toward the street door, "an ye get not speedily to your business, I will have in my whole company of Spanish soldiers! What, ho!" He flung open the door. A howl burst from the servant, a shout from the landlord; they were up and away in a moment. Belle-Isle closed the door and forgetting his grandeur,

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heaped wood upon the coals with his own noble hands. The moments passed, during which Anna ceased to shiver as the warmth stole out into the room like a voice of welcome. Belle-Isle did not cease rattling his scabbard against his brass-linked girdle. No one came. At last, in uneasy doubt, he took up a candle and set forth upon an exploration. There was no one to be found in the house. He now understood why the landlord had been so long in first making his appearance; it had been in order to give his family time to flee from the terrible Spaniards. Now even the landlord and servant had fled. Belle-Isle returned to the general room.

"This way, little Bluemask," he said, beckoning with his candle. She rose, dazed and miserable, and followed him, unquestioning, to the landlord's own room. "Here will soon be a good fire," he cried, kneeling before a vacant fireplace, and arranging the faggots. "See, there are women's dresses thrown about; make an exchange and dry thine own apparel. Have no fear of an intrusion, for there be goodly bolts upon this door. Then, when thou art at some comfort, come back to the front room. There shall I await thee. We have some adventures before us, Bluemask."

He smiled upon her brightly as he rose from his knees, and the light from the dancing flames showed his face radiantly beautiful. She looked up at him in a helpless way, with such a desolate light in her cheerless eyes, that he was deeply touched. He would have kissed her compassionately, but he suddenly remembered that she thought herself a woman. To him

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she was still a child, who had wandered into circumstances too great for her. As he paused at the door he looked back upon the pitiful figure, the slight form to which the wet clothes clung, making her smaller and more childlike than usual.

Slowly he left her, taking with him a suit belonging to the landlord. When he regained the general room, the fire was blazing cheerfully. He attired himself in the big misfit, and warmed his flesh-colored hose, and crimson doublet before the hearth. As they dried, he hummed a French song, while a smile flitted like a chorus between each verse. He was thinking of little Bluemask, and of his future plans. He was quite happy now, although not long ago his parting from Rosamunda had stirred the depths of his anger and sorrow. Ah, how he had loved Rosamunda! But now when he thought of her his heart was stirred with indignation. So cruel, so heartless, so Spanish in her inmost being! Her face? Yes. Her foot? Yes, indeed. Her form? True. But her nature,—that nature which could league itself with Gonzalvo to break Anna's heart and the hearts of her parents? No, that was not for him. Belle-Isle shook his head.

"It is a good thing," he mused, "that I could stop loving Rosamunda! Now what would become of me if I, knowing her so unworthy, were unable to quit adoring her? Thank heaven, I can stop loving on the very instant!" He sighed. "What a face she has,—what a delicious haughtiness. But how I hate her when I think of little Bluemask lying white and still at her

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feet!" It weighed nothing with him that Rosamunda was under mortal terror of her father. He ceased to regard the situation from her point of view.

When his clothes were dry, he dressed, then waited impatiently for Anna. As she did not come, he at last went to seek her. Yes, she was quite ready. She had been ready,—how long? She did not know. She let him lead her by the hand back to the settle before the fire. She made a wan figure in her shrunken clothes, her hair hanging about her shoulders, where it had been spread to dry, her face bloodless, her eyes without animation. He was touched by her thin arms, the arms of a child. He was also conscious of his own sorry appearance, for the crimson doublet had not been improved by its bath, and the flesh-colored hose were streaked with mud. Alas! his finery belonged to his romance of the past, his romance of Rosamunda. He sighed, then rattled his sword for comfort, and addressed the girl as he walked up and down before the settle.

"Little Bluemask, where is it likely thy parents have gone? What places have they spoken of as probable visiting-points? Trace them with thy fancy, child."

"They would have carried me away to France, if I had not broken their hearts," she answered; "but often before that, my father spoke of going to Holland where our religion has more favor." She drooped her head, as her dull, listless tones came to an end.

"France?" he repeated. "Think of that no more, child, they have not gone to France. I am done with France till a certain lady I wot of hath either died or

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married,—it is all one to me, by Belle-Isle! But Holland? Yes, it shall be Holland, whither they have departed. So we have settled that point. Come, cheer up, little girl, let us plan. Tell me about Hulst Filips. He knew thee when thou wast a prattling child? Hath no winning ways to cozen him into good humor?"

"He cannot endure me, Norman. He has a son; his son did not consider me a prattling child; and so my father told Hulst Filips he must either depart, or drive away his son. But Hulst Filips loved his position better than his son, so he abode, and the son departed. Therefore Hulst hates me, while still he lives upon my father's bounty."

"Dost mean to say, Anna, that this son of the seneschal was in love with thee?"

"He was," replied Anna, with a barely perceptible trace of spirit in her voice.

"Now this is a strange thing," exclaimed Belle-Isle, who purposely addressed Anna as a child, in order to rouse her from her lethargy, for he had found her proud of the few years she had lived. "In my country, men do not go into the nursery to hunt sweethearts. Yet art thou, a mere child, already loved by two! So there is no hope in Hulst. Now as to relatives?"

"There are none."

"Better still. Now as to this Enrique?"

"I ask only that I may never see his face again!" she cried, with such fierce energy, that the Frenchman clapped his hand upon his sword in delight.

"Now, now!" he cried, "this is best of all. We are

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in a fair way to mend the bucket when we have found out where it leaks. Thou heardest him say to Gonzalvo how his making love to thee was the hardest thing he had ever done in his life, and that he was done with thee since he had used thee for his revenge, and that he — ”

“ I heard everything, Norman, — do not ! ”

“ In a word, Anna, thou lovest him as at the start ? ”

“ I left all love for him at the river bank,” she said.

“ Oh, I would have died — not to escape his treachery, but to flee from thoughts of my mother.”

“ We will go to this mother, child.”

She jumped up from the settle. “ Oh, when ? how ? ”

“ That, we are to plan. There is nothing to keep thee in Brussels ; no parents, — no relatives, no lover. There is nothing to keep me here, since the lady I love has proved herself a cruel and heartless maid.”

“ Is it so, Norman ? ” she asked, coming to his side.

“ Dost thou suffer also ? ”

Belle-Isle felt for his heart, but his emotion changed before he found it. “ Little Bluemask,” he said, laying his hand gently upon her shoulder, “ we shall go to Holland, and find thy parents, and compel them to believe in thine innocence. I will go as the old beggar, thou shalt be my daughter. I am old enough to be thy father, — almost old enough. At least I am twenty-two ; and that is a grave age, child. I can scarce remember when I was an infant of thy tender years. We must walk to Holland, since we are without money. When we meet any one, I shall be blind, and thou shalt



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have me safe by the hand to steer me along like some grand old ship towed among reefs. Wilt thou come with me? ”

“ Alas ! Norman, with whom else may I go? And thou believest in me, — thou, only, hast faith in me ! ”

“ And remember, child, I saved thy life. Therefore thy life belongs to me. Had I not reached forth my arms to snatch thee from the grave, thou wouldst at this moment be dead, but not only dead — that were the smallest part of the matter, — but frying thy tender body in the fires of the devil ; there is no other prospect for a suicide.”

“ Oh, Norman, I was insane with mad thoughts ! There seemed hot irons pressing upon my brain ! I thought of Enrique’s villainy, and of my mother’s tears, and of my father’s aching heart as he lashed the horses forward in the night, to get away from his daughter whom he had disinherited. And I saw my past in all its true light for the first time. Love had blinded me. Enrique’s soft words had poisoned me, — yes, I saw all this for the first time. I threw myself into the river to end everything. But I forgot God. Yes, I owe my life to thee, my life and my soul.”

“ God keep thy soul, little Bluemask,” said the young man tenderly, “ but I claim thy life.”

“ How, Norman?” she asked, looking into his face doubtfully. “ Is it thy wish to marry me? ”

Belle-Isle was angry. “ Now did God ever turn out so pretty a form with such unfinished works in its head ! ” he exclaimed. “ Canst think of nothing but a husband,

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child? Wait till thou art grown before thy mind run riot with thoughts of love."

She jerked away from his grasp, while red spots showed in her cheeks. "Do not think it is my wish to marry thee!" she cried. "But I knew not what else thy words might mean. No, I shall never marry, never; that thought is put away with the thought of—" She would not speak Enrique's name, but relapsed into silence.

"Anna," said Belle-Isle more gently, "love is a very small part of life, but there is always so much more bone than marrow! From the time we begin to reflect that we be single persons until the time we have doubled in matrimony, then is love's season. But consider the long stretches on either side of that verdant pasture of April delights. Love's day is set between years of dreams and years of regret. When I ask for thy life, it is that I may guard it, and so restore thee innocent and sweet and pure to thy parents. Give me this guardianship of thee, Anna, and thou shalt find me a gentle master."

"I wonder why thou art willing to undertake the guardianship of such a thankless child. But I fear even to question thy reason, lest thou change thy mind."

"Fear not; and as for my reasons, they are two: first there is the adventure of tramping through the country with young company, instead of tramping alone; second, my sweetheart has proved unworthy — her name is Rosamunda."

"It is a pretty name, Norman," she said a little wistfully.

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"Is it, Anna? Why, so I used to think, but I have changed my mind. Perhaps I was right at first. Rosamunda! It does sound poetical." He sighed. "Well, —and the few acquaintances I had in these parts are imprisoned by the Inquisition. So I am all alone in the world, but for thee. It is a sweet thought that thou mayst hear me when I laugh, even if thou canst not echo my mirth. It is so lonesome to laugh alone! And so we beg our way from town to town and see many people and bright scenes, and come into Holland."

"But if my father went to France?"

"No, he did not go to France; he went to Holland. We will inquire if his carriage was seen thus and thus. We will trace them without doubt."

"Heaven bless thee, Norman! But to beg!"

"Why, yes, who will give us sustenance unless we beg for it? The world does not give away anything for nothing."

"But," said the girl, "one might work. Does that not sound pleasanter than thy choice? There is the independence; and when we have money, we can ride upon our way."

"Sound pleasanter, little Bluemask? Now thou canst not think how thy song of industry grates upon my ear! Work, forsooth! What adventure is there in work? Anybody can work; the lowest churl can work. Anybody can ride through life if he can pay the driver. This talk of work takes all the taste out of my mouth that had come to fill me with delight as I chewed dainty fancies."

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"As for me, Norman, it is nothing. But methinks thou wilt not feel at ease in stretching forth thy hand for alms."

"Then think it no more, child; I shall be more at my ease than I would be toiling in sweat and dishonor! I shall know all the time I am a gentleman, and that he who gives me alms is a fool, and that she who holds my other hand is my little sister. Come, thou wilt adventure with me?"

"It shall be according to thy will."

"Good! Now I must make thee look more like the old man's beggar-maid. We must find shears for thy hair, poor child, and crop thee, for such tresses could never be disguised. And we must snip thy skirt here and there, making it ragged; and thou shalt find needle, and patch on divers colors,—yes, shalt cut off a piece of this crimson doublet, and sew it upon thee, for I am done with my crimson doublet, alas! But thou shalt carry one piece of it as a souvenir. Come, then, little sister, let us forage. It grows toward day. The timid Netherlanders will return in the daylight, and finding no company of Spaniards, but only a Frenchman and a maid, will drive us forth with amazing courage."

It did not take them long to find all that they required. Poor Anna's beautiful hair was cut short and burned in the fireplace. Her dress was deformed with knife and needle, torn here, patched there in some homely color. There were wooden shoes upon her feet, stuffed with pieces of Belle-Isle's crimson doublet, since they were too large for her. An ugly drab-colored cloth was

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wrapped about her head in lieu of a bonnet, hiding nearly all her face. The young man blackened his fingers in the ashes, and took pleasure in touching her up to the proper degree of grime, smearing her hands and wrists, daubing her cheeks with lampblack.

Anna endured all patiently. "My poor hair!" she exclaimed when it was cut away. "My dear mother was very proud of it." This was the only sign of emotion she gave during her transformation into a beggar-maid. Belle-Isle continued to talk in a light, uninterrupted flow. He had grown fond of the "little child," and he found it not unpleasant to touch her cheek and brow with his blackened finger; indeed, he felt the far-away beginning of a thrill, as his forefinger rested upon her lips. When she was ready for her part, he foraged in the larder and pantry, and succeeded in getting together some provisions which he placed in a bundle containing a few necessities. "Now we are ready! I would that thou couldst see thyself! Really, little Bluemask, thou art the most disconsolate figure imaginable. What part of thy child's face is exposed to view, is so blurred and besmirched — by Belle-Isle! no man will ever give thee a second look. And that sagging drab-colored shawl and dress, and those wooden shoes! By Belle-Isle! I should never go a step with thee if I did not know the truth, while thy clothes give the world the lie."

She gave a wan smile. "Who is Belle-Isle?" she asked listlessly, as they hurried to the door. "Thou saidst he is no saint."

"He is no saint as yet," answered the Frenchman.

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"But he is my very best friend, and I love him. Little beggar, if thou wouldst ever enter into my very heart, call on old Norman — that is the key. Now, first to the wooden glove!"

"Oh, no, Norman, please, Norman, let me never see that place again!"

"It cannot be helped, child. But thou shalt stay below. My change of clothes is there in my wardrobe of the little finger."

"Yes, I will wait for thee at the foot of the sign-post," said Anna.

The streets were now flooded with light, for the moon was high. Seeking what protection the shadows might give, they reached the glover's house. Leaving the girl below, the young man ascended, grateful for the deserted square, since his form was sharply defined as it slipped along the wall. He gained the huge glove, and as he took down his bag, memories came. The last time he had passed the night in this airy nest, his soul had been illuminated with the love of Rosamunda. Now he felt for her a scorn that had turned out that light. He took off the crimson doublet and the flesh-colored hose with a sigh; he would see them no more. Soon he was dressed in the rags of his beggar's disguise. He rolled up his masquerade garments, and stuffed them into the hollow of the thumb. But he thrust the sword, secure in its scabbard, into the bag. People would wonder at this object. Still, a beggar could not go about with a sword at his side, neither could he protect a maiden without one. He wrapped the bag tightly about the weapon,

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then weighed it in his hands doubtfully. If any one demanded an explanation of the singular parcel, what then? He could not say that he walked upon his common staff, and carried his Sunday staff for holiday use. It must not be a staff. And here was the little red mask which had rested upon Rosamunda's face. What was she to him now? He sat upon the edge of the structure, his legs dangling, and tore up the red mask, letting the little pieces rain down upon Anna.

"Now, away, away," he said, when he stood beside Anna. "Soon the city gates will be opened. Let us linger near the northern gate — that way is Holland and thy parents. But look, Anna, what wouldst thou suppose to be wrapped up in this bag?"

"Thy sword," she answered promptly.

"Why?" he asked, with a fallen countenance.

"Because I see thy sword no other place, Norman."

"But suppose thou didst not know I own a sword. Then what wouldst suppose in the bag?"

"I would suppose thou hadst procured thee a sword."

"But child, what would an old beggar do, buying a sword?"

"But thou art no old beggar, Norman."

"By Belle-Isle!" exclaimed the Frenchman impatiently, "thou hast no more fancy than a schoolman. What if thou sawest me for the first time, thinking me an old man, then, then, child, what wouldst suppose in this bag?"

"Be not displeased with me, Norman," she answered timidly. "How can I tell what I might think, if I were



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somebody else? Being only myself, I can think only my thoughts, and they are that it is a sword in the bag."

"Let it be a sword then, in heaven's name!" said the other ruefully. "But, child, I tell thee this; such directness of ideas, as if thy every conception moves upon a straight line, will make an end of all my joy."

"Oh, Norman, thou canst not mean to desert me!" she asked with sudden fear.

"I know not," he answered gloomily. "Thou hast everything to make thee happy. Thou no longer lovest Enrique, so that grief is at an end; I have promised to restore thee to thy parents, so there is comfort. And all I ask of thee is a lighter lift of thy mind. I will do anything for thee, little Bluemask, provided I enjoy the thing while doing it. But, by Belle-Isle! I will not bind my mind down to the earth, and clamp iron hoops about my soul for anybody's sorrows."

"Indeed, indeed, Norman," she said, the tears rushing to her eyes, so that she put up her hand to brush away the blinding mist, "I will do all I can to keep thee happy. Norman, I did not think thou couldst speak so — so sorrowfully."

"I suppose not," he answered, still indignant. "Thou comest like a black cloud over the sun of my happiness so soon as it begins to peep forth at the world! Now here is this bag; I asked thee what it looked to contain. 'A sword,' thou insistest. I implore thee for another word. 'A sword, a sword,' thou clamorest."

"Norman, I will do better; I will not weary thee with

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my sorrow. I will laugh when I can. See, Norman, I smile for thee, — is that not some little comfort? And as for the bag, it sticks forth at either end so straight and hard, I know well what I might think if it were the dead of winter — that it contained some frozen snake thou hadst picked up upon the way.”

Norman Belle-Isle’s manner instantly changed. “Now this is better,” he said with a laugh. “Perchance the folk we meet will think it one of last winter’s frozen vipers left over, and cheap upon the market. Oh, thou little Bluemask! But the smile was sweet, for all thy wooden shoes and drab-colored vestments.”

“But Norman,” she said, seeking a light tone, “one does not smile with one’s shoes.”

“I know not,” he answered, pleased at her endeavor to obey his wish. “I never saw a lovely maiden smile yet, but her feet in some manner seemed mixed up in the effort.”

“That is a great mystery,” she said in wonder. “But dost thou think me a lovely maiden?”

“I think thee a foolish child,” he answered hastily. “And if thou couldst see thyself, loveliness would not enter thy mind. Such a wretched, bedraggled picture it would be hard to parallel.”

“Then I must look somewhat as thou,” she observed. They reached the city wall and sought the lodge where those who came to the gate before its opening found a resting-place. The light from a candle, set in the wall, fell upon them. Anna sought the corner of a high-backed bench, and soon was fast asleep. The obnoxious

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drab-colored shawl fell upon her shoulder, revealing the irregular short hair.

Belle-Isle regarded her from shorn crown to wooden shoes, and nodded his head cheerfully. "There is no danger here of sentiment," he muttered. "Now this is the greatest adventure that Belle-Isle ever ran into with open eyes. To tramp the country with a pretty girl, and yet not fall in love with her! By my sword! I never thought to brother any pretty girl until we all be brothers and sisters in heaven. Pooh! She is a mere child. Her arms have the leanness of childhood, and there are bones in her neck, ay, bones, by Belle-Isle! And yet she is not so much a child, either. I am glad her hair is burned up — poor thing! I am glad her shawl is drab-colored; I hate drab color, and it seems to override all the other colors of her garments. I am glad her shoes are wooden, and so much too big for her. I am glad of everything. Poor Rodrigo!" he added putting his hand upon the dagger as it lay securely hidden under his rags. "What did I say to thee? All ends well — if not for thee, for another!"

## BOOK II. ROSAMUNDA

### *Chapter One*

#### ROSAMUNDA'S CHOICE

**W**HEN Rosamunda first became conscious of the world, a beautiful young face bent over her, a black veil concealing the hair. To that face belonged gentle hands and a lap ever ready to hold the little girl who found the world so strange. There were other faces, always faces of women, but they were neither fair nor young, and their stern look caused her to give her first friend that complete adoration known only to a child whose telescope has not yet found spots in the sun. Sister Mala was sixteen; but Rosamunda, judging with the relentless inaccuracy of youth, thought her very old.

Those others were sisters, and it was well they called each other "Sister," for how else could a little girl know they loved one another? For their lives did not give forth the fragrance of gentle words and kind smiles. Rosamunda knew there was a time before Sister Mala and the stern-faced women in black, a time when there was no little stone cell with iron bars at the high slit of a window, no iron bed, no cold

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floors. Did she remember a stern silent man? And a woman's tender eyes? Perhaps that was Sister Mala. But the man?

One day Rosamunda said, "Sister Mala, wast thou always before I was?"

Sister Mala kissed her softly. "What wouldst thou say, little darling?"

"Who was that, that time?" And Rosamunda looked up wistfully into the large brown eyes. "She looked as thou lookest now."

"Thy mother, perhaps." And Sister Mala sighed.

"Was the other my father?"

"Thy father is Señor Gonzalvo de Oviedo y Varrez. Canst say so long a name, little sweetheart?"

"No," said the child; "I am afraid of that man."

"Afraid? But little girls love their fathers, even when they are unkind and make them take the veil. It is because they love the good God and give him their dearest sacrifice. It was so with Abraham. Yet it did not pleasure the dear Lord to take away his child."

"Does everybody live in a convent?"

"Oh, no, there are beautiful houses with soft carpets and warmth all the time, and so much to eat! Flowers grow about the walls, and girls and boys run and laugh, and darling mothers look from the window—" Sister Mala sobbed.

"Oh, Sister Mala! let us go to that place and stay forever."

This restored the other to reason. "Dear comfort, thou art to stay here until thy father comes for thee.

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And I am to stay until I die, for I am the good God's virgin."

"Would the good God," Rosamunda crossed herself with her tiny hand, "be sorry to have thee playing in the flowers, with thy mother looking from the window?"

"Indeed, yes, sweetheart. The more I give up, the better God is pleased."

"Sister Mala, is God happy?"

"How can he be happy, little comfort, when men are so wicked?"

"Then I see no use in being God, if he can't be happy," remarked the young theologian.

"My little darling —" began Sister Mala.

Then came the sharp voice of the abbess: "Sister Mala! Why these sinful endearing terms of human affection? I fear I was unwise to entrust her soul to thy care."

"I will do so no more," faltered the girl in an agony of fear lest her charge be taken away. After that, no one called Rosamunda by a sweet name, but though discipline silenced the lips, the child read "darling" in Sister Mala's eyes.

When Rosamunda was older she said, "What a lovely name is thine!"

"Alas, Rosamunda, thou dost not know that Mala means 'Evil.'"

"Then who named thee Mala?" cried the other fiercely. "Who called thee Evil?"

"Hush, Rosamunda! The abbess gave me my new

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name to remind me that I was born in sin. Sometimes I forget it; I am so young."

"Young, Sister Ma — but I will not call thee Mala. Thou art not wicked, thou art sweetheart, darling, and dear comfort."

Sister Mala pressed her passionately to her bosom. "Thou hast remembered?" she whispered.

"I know what thou callest me in thy heart," said Rosmunda with a smile! "But when no one is listening, I will give thee the sweetest name I ever heard. And that is Josephine."

"Josephine? Whence this name?"

"The mother abbess spoke it last night, and a memory leaped up like a flame in my brain; but, like a flame, it sank and went out. I must have known it once."

During those days Rosamunda and Sister Mala slept together. One night when an iron window-bar cut the big moon in two, little Rosamunda woke and was glad of the friendly light. The heat of the August night penetrated even the massive walls of the convent. The little girl threw aside the covering and held up her toes that their shadows might dance upon the whitewashed wall. Then she noticed the perspiration upon the fair face of her sleeping friend.

"Poor Sister Josephine is asleep and does n't know all that cover is heaped upon her," she thought. She put her little hand under the hot cheek and felt the moisture upon the pillow. "But I will make Sister Josephine cool," and gently she drew the cover away. Sister Mala's coarse gown was buttoned tight about her neck. "That



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is for penance; but if I unfasten it, and draw it back, — so! — God won't care, because she won't know she is happy." Rosamunda with a little smile of loving mischief unfastened the heavy garment, and sat up, the better to slip it down from over the smooth white shoulders. And the next moment she gave a low cry; for the bared back was bruised with many wounds, some so recent that flecks of blood stained the gown. The child stared with horror at the mutilated back, and was afraid. She put back the garment, her fingers trembling so she could scarcely button it again. And then she sobbed herself to sleep. Who had hurt her Sister Josephine? .

Sometimes Sister Mala did not come to bed till long after Rosamunda was asleep. When she was older, the child became curious to know the reason. One night when she had lain waiting a long time and her friend did not come, the child dressed quickly and slipped into the corridor. The cell doors stood open, the cells were deserted, but no chanting was to be heard from the consistory. With numbed feet she slipped along the pavement to the chapel. No one, nothing was there but the huge Crucifix, looking awful as the lighted tapers showed the tragic face.

Oh, where had the nuns gone? Where was the only face that ever wore a smile for her, — Sister Josephine, upon whose sad face so often blossomed for her a rose of welcome? The cells were filled with mysterious breathings; the tapers glowed like ghosts of dead cheer; the Blessed Virgin seemed to move her neck to watch the solitary form. With a heart throbbing with dread,

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Rosamunda slipped to the stone steps leading down to the crypt. There came to her from below echoes as of laughter. Her heart leapt to meet the sound of mirth; had the nuns gone down there to hide their happiness from God? When she reached the foot of the steps, she realized that the voices cried out, not in laughter, but in agony. Trembling, she shrank away; oh, to be back in her little cell, undiscovered! But at that moment the huge door leading into the crypt was flung open, and there stood the mother abbess.

“Rosamunda!” she cried hastily. Then her indecision changed to cold resolve. “After all, it is time for thee to understand. Come!” She caught the child’s arm and almost dragged her into the crypt. At one end of the apartment was a platform upon which ten nuns were singing penitential hymns in Latin. Before them stood the others, naked to the waist, each holding a scourge. They were lashing each other upon back and bosom in a devout ecstasy of pious zeal. Rosamunda could not understand that they were averting the wrath of God by anticipating his punishment. All she could comprehend were the poor old bodies bruised and bleeding, the misshapen bony frames, the shrieks at each downfall of the terrible scourges, the glistening in the eyes as they dealt a blow to the next for every blow received. Rosamunda’s gaze fell upon Sister Mala, naked like the rest, shrinking under her punishment. A wild scream burst from her throat, and, tearing away from the abbess, she darted forward and threw her arms about her friend.

“Wicked woman!” she cried to the nun whose bare

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arm was poised to bring down the scourge upon Sister Mala's back. She burst into a passion of grief while the pale face of her friend drooped over her in silence. The Latin hymn was interrupted, the scourges rested. The nuns seemed abashed before that little witness. Each took a comfort in the mere presence of the child in the convent, for the sight of her was the only tender part in their lives. It had pleased them to think of the little one as unconscious of their sufferings. Now she saw them bleeding and cruel, — would she hate them henceforth?

The mother abbess tore Rosamunda from her friend, and hurried her up to her cell. The old woman seated herself upon the bed, and tried to point a moral to the scene in the crypt. But when she began to speak, Rosamunda thought of Sister Mala bowing under the scourge. "Oh, my Sister Josephine, my sweetheart, my dear comfort!" she wailed. "Go away, I hate thee! They are hurting my Sister Josephine, who never harmed any one. And I will not call her Mala, for she is not evil, but thou art wicked to let them beat her."

The mother abbess waited for this storm to subside, then spoke coldly. "Child, I must open thy mind (born in sin) to the truth. Thou art old enough to think upon sorrows, and whatever in this world is not a sorrow is a sin. There are those who call themselves Carmelites who lead easy lives. But I thank the austere and blessed Virgin, I belong to the strictest sect, restored to severe piety by holy St. Theresa — whose soul be blessed! Our scourging is the sweetest sight

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the eyes of the blessed saints can look down upon. By our stripes the wounds of the Blessed Saviour are healed. We mortify our bodies to preserve our souls. Every lash laid upon our sinful flesh is a prick to spur the soul upward. Oh, my child, learn that it is in our power to save ourselves! Who would not beat himself to obtain salvation?

"It is four hundred years since the most blessed St. Berthold of Calabria built a chapel on Mount Carmel where Elias disappeared. Since then the Carmelites have worshipped God with lash and rod. It was Elias himself who formulated our code, delivered to him by angels of light. His disciples were Jonah and Micah; and when Obadiah left King Ahab's court, his wife took the veil from the blessed hands of Elias and became the first abbess of the Carmelites. Wilt thou not become one of us, and sit with us in Paradise?"

"No, no, no, I will never join your order!" cried the child passionately.

"As to that," returned the other coldly, "it depends upon thy father's will. An he say 'Yea,' thou shalt join instantly for thy soul's salvation!"

"But why must our backs be beaten?" sobbed Rosamunda.

"When we mortify our hateful bodies, we mortify the sin within them."

"But all bodies are not hateful. Sister Mala is beautiful. And my body is not hateful; I like it!"

"That is because thou art a child of Satan, poor reprobate. The blessed Son of God bleeds from the

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wounds made by the nails in his palms and feet. Think upon him. By our stripes the good God is appeased."

"If that is so, mother, I do not like God very well."

The mother abbess groaned. "Oh, sinful blindness in entrusting thee to young Sister Mala! Thou dost not like God? Thou shalt have neither bite nor sup till thou dost like him!"

The next day Rosamunda was locked up in her cheerless cell that she might learn to like God. When evening dragged to a close, she liked him less than ever. During the next day she steeled her heart. That night when her jailer came, she found that Rosamunda still did not like God very well. The next day came a letter preparing the abbess for the coming of Rosamunda's father. On his account the abbess surrendered, and Sister Mala was sent to comfort her little friend.

"Think how much worse it might be!" holding the child upon her lap. "See! I have thee to love. In thy youth I become young again. And we can wander outside the walls and breathe the mountain air."

"But there is no grass, Sister Josephine, and all we can see are cruel mountains, shutting out the world."

"No, oh, no! Rosamunda, can we not see each other?" The child threw her arms about Sister Mala's neck. "A hundred years ago, I might have been one of the Flagellantes. Even now there is a secret order in lower Saxony."

"What are Flagellantes?" the other asked in an awed voice.

"Devout men and women, who used to travel from

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city to city entirely naked, beating themselves with scourges. The Blessed Pope has interdicted the custom since the public exposure of unclothed bodies savors of unrighteous pride. Now we lash ourselves in secret. That is why I say it might be so much worse. In the crypt I only strip to the waist, and down there I am unashamed. But if I had to go naked along the highway, I fear false shame would weigh me down. Some are, by their very nature, Flagellantes," she added with a sigh.

One day as Rosamunda stood in the barren plain which sloped toward the sandy wastes skirting the mountains, Sister Mala came hastily from the convent. The child pointed toward the mountains saying, "I was looking for something fresh and pretty; I should not have found it if thou hadst not brought hither thy smile. But, oh, sweetheart! Tears?"

Sister Mala embraced Rosamunda and still tried to smile, saying, "Thy father is here."

"My father? Oh, I am afraid! Will he take me away?"

"I know not, but he would see thee. Kiss me, Rosamunda." When Sister Mala spoke her name it was like a caress. When the child saw Señor Gonzalvo she knew it was his face which for years had haunted her with vague fears. He was dressed as a great captain. He examined her coldly, leisurely, then turned to the abbess: "Yes, I will take her." That was his greeting.

Rosamunda could not give Sister Mala a long last look because tears came and drowned out the pale, fair

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face. And the nuns kissed her good-bye, — even the mother abbess ! Gonzalvo took her up before him upon his great war-horse, and she wondered if the animal minded her taking such a liberty as sitting upon him, and if he might not suddenly throw his great head around and seize her between his teeth. After many days of silent, unhappy association with her father, they reached Salamanca, and drew up before a palace whose frowning front chilled her heart. She thought it another convent.

Gonzalvo lifted her to the ground. In answer to his loud knock there came to the door a woman of thirty whose face had once been beautiful. But now she was shrinking and wore a timid look as if she longed to hide from the light. Gonzalvo stared at her insolently. "Who has been here since I left?"

"No one, Gonzalvo."

"We shall see," he cried roughly. "Melaga will tell me the truth. Here is Rosamunda." He sprang upon his horse.

The woman spoke timidly: "Wilt thou not enter, Gonzalvo?"

"I must to England with Alva, concerning the king's marriage with Queen Mary. For months, Isabella, thou shalt have the ruling of this house. People may come and make merry since I cannot be here to forbid. But remember, — there is always Melaga ! When I return, he will tell me all that has happened — even the thoughts of thy head !"

"Gonzalvo !" she cried in terror, "wilt thou never



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trust me? I have left all for thee—and my people despise me for thy sake; yet thou wilt believe Melaga though his mouth is full of evil!”

“See that his evil be not spoken against thee!” cried Gonzalvo with a bitter laugh. “Remember, Isabella!”

And he was gone without a word to his daughter. But she did not care; she feared him. His silence, his lowering glance were eloquent of the gloom that brooded over his soul. Thus Rosamunda came home. Home? Even when she was eighteen, the palace seemed less a home than the grim cell of the Carmelite nunnery. At first she would have tried to make friends with Isabella, but there was always Melaga,—an old Spaniard with shifty eyes, a lean, brown hand and a noiseless step. Ever he watched Isabella with hate and suspicion, and though the woman taught the child sewing, embroidery, French, English, and the faith, she never gave her pupil a kind word—or a glance of liking.

During those years she saw little of her father. She thought he hated her; he had a way of watching her out of his deep-set eyes that made her blood thrill with fear. When he addressed her, it was to ask about Isabella’s conduct during his absence. He was a slave to suspicions, and Melaga with the cunning of one who makes his living by ministering to another’s folly, dropped half-hints that kept Isabella’s life a long suspense. The child longed to ask about her mother, but Gonzalvo’s face forbade an appeal, and she could not ask the woman who had usurped her mother’s place.

When she was eighteen, Melaga offered to introduce

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her into society. She might attend fêtes and laugh with the young; her father made but one condition: she was still to live without friends, she must never dream of marriage.

Rosamunda had always taken her pleasures with a deal of vinegar.

She accepted the condition, mingled with the young and gay, and learned that she was beautiful.

One night on returning from a ball, her brain still whirling with lights and laughter, she saw before the door Gonzalvo's great war-horse. Melaga, who always accompanied her, gave a quick look, and the crafty gleam in his eyes wrecked in one blow a dream of happiness. In the reception-room her father awaited her, his arms folded, his brows bent gloomily.

"Rosamunda," he said abruptly, ignoring her greeting, "I leave soon for the Low Countries."

She wondered that he should explain his plans. Her haughty bearing always vanished before this man. The timid obsequiousness of Isabella and her own solitary life had hardened her nature, while the flattery of the gay world had crystallized her pride. Now she hated herself because any one could humble her with a glance. But Gonzalvo was greater than her pride.

"I know not when I shall return," he continued in his harsh tones, "and I cannot leave thee here in such uncertainty."

"Yet," she ventured, "I have seen little of thee in the past."

"Then let it be that I will not leave thee here. There

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are wars before me, and I may leave my body in that accursed land of heresy." He looked at her as if meditating dark plans. "I will not leave thee here. What sayest thou to the convent?"

A cry of despair escaped her lips. "Oh, father! do not condemn me to spend my life in — in —"

He watched her with a smile, as if gloating upon her unhappiness. She drooped her head. At last he spoke: "No, I do not condemn thee. Come as my esquire into the Low Countries and carry my musket to battle. Thy soldier's garb will hide the secret of thy sex. Out in the world it is not known that I have a daughter,—Alva thinks me a merry bachelor. I will break the news of an unhappy marriage—I claim my son at last: 'This is my Enrique,' I say, 'my son and my esquire.'"

Rosamunda grew white. "But, father —"

"'But' means the convent. Make thy choice. In either case thou wilt please God — by killing heretics, or by lashing thy body."

So Rosamunda chose the soldier's uniform, in preference to scourging herself in cold crypts and living in the company of gaunt, silent nuns. Why should she not be a man to the world! Love and marriage were not for her; she would renounce her sex and be Enrique de Oviedo. Thus from an enforced choice she came to the Netherlands unconscious of a Belle-Isle in all the world.

## *Chapter Two*

### *ROSAMUNDA'S DREAM OF BELLE-ISLE*

**R**OSAMUNDA came to the Netherlands with hatred for heresy, and with no pity for ignorance. She believed with King Philip that there was but one remedy. The people had been presented with the Inquisition as an object lesson; they had been shown signal mercy, since the burning of heretics had been softened to hanging; but neither education nor leniency had destroyed their rebellious hunger for liberty. Even avowed Catholics connived at blasphemous infidelity. They must be crushed, and the Duke of Alba was a fit scourge for the victims. As Rosamunda looked upon the sullen faces of the inhabitants, she felt that the time of the Crusades had come again. This 1567 would be written in history as the year of the holy modern crusade.

Nature demanded that Rosamunda should love something, but since leaving Sister Mala the world had not given her one friend. She shrank from association with the soldiers. She gave her religion the warmth of her heart, and the world had its coldness. She kissed the feet of the Crucifix and the Saviour felt her adoring lips.

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She knelt before the image of the Blessed Mother of God, and in a mysterious sense the image became the living Holy Mary, holding out hands in benediction. The statues of the saints became the saints themselves, as she gazed upon them, and she loved their pure sweet faces, their holy feet, which had trodden paths of martyrdom, their arms, that longed to embrace her. One ate of the very body of Christ; and of his blood, which was shed day after day, one could drink and grow strong in faith. But the Netherlands were enemies of her Saviour. Now thanks to the good God who had suffered her to become one of this army of vengeance — to strike for Heaven and King Philip!

These thoughts were in her mind when she first saw Belle-Isle seated in Hendrik Janssen's cart. In Wilhelmina and her companions she recognized true Hollanders; but the visage of Belle-Isle startled her, for he was no Netherlander. There was that in his handsome face, tilted toward the light, that moved her strangely. An impulse came to warn him of the danger of mingling with doomed heretics. She made the sign of the cross. He pointed up as if to answer that he relied upon God, not upon the making of signs. Alas! was he, too, a traitor? Suddenly she became conscious that her father was watching her, and she turned her eyes away.

Would she ever see him again? It was improbable. Would she think of him again? Ah, yes; try as she might, she could not banish that face, that form, instinct with manly grace. But what was he to her? Something, — but what? He was so unlike other men

## ROSAMUNDA'S DREAM

—there was such a sparkle in his eye, and a light upon his face as if a lamp burned always in his soul! There was such a merry shrewdness in the curl of his lip, such a gleam in his curls! His image grew upon her and she did not resist its domination. But when she thought of him she grew ashamed of her disguise, and feared Gonzalvo more than ever, for he seemed conscious of a change in her life.

That night, after long thinking of the face which had become the beauty-spot in her memory, her spirit rose in hot revolt. Her father was feasting at Count Egmont's. She ventured into the street dressed as a woman, conscious of the great risk but eager for the world to recognize her sex. That was an awful moment when she found Gonzalvo leading some boisterous soldiers in pursuit. But her veil and dress hid her identity and Belle-Isle saved her from an unknown fate. Thus once more she saw that bright, up-tilted face, that merry smile, that form of grace and beauty. She heard his flexible voice, but all that night her mind was haunted by the terror of discovery. She saw him through her mist of fear, and he seemed to lack the charm of her dreams. Thinking she should never meet him again, she had touched up the memory of him with the perfect art of fancy, and now she found him so different from her thought. Besides, while free to love his image, the man she must hold as a stranger; so she left him that night without a farewell.

From that night her father watched her with a darker brow, for he knew that she was in some manner changed.

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Her dreams had shifted; they were of the man Belle-Isle, as he was in the flesh. Gonzalvo compelled her to make love to Anna van der Loren, hinting at a terrible fate whenever she should disobey his wishes. This fate to which he referred with a look that chilled her blood, forbade even a dream of revolt. When she fought with Belle-Isle she longed for his sword to pierce her heart. When he knelt, holding her hand, love ran through her veins like a laughing flame. When he came as the old beggar, how gladly she would have given up her state to go forth with him! And he had vanished from her life with that terrible "I hate thee!" But was it not better that he should hate, since marriage was not for her? "Oh, yes, it is better!" she whispered, when living that night again, "but—I love him." And the tears would come.

She wore next her heart the note Belle-Isle had sent by Rodrigo. She often drew it forth, not to read it since it was known by heart, but to kiss it as if it could feel the passion leaping in her great eyes; to see the lines his hands had traced; to hold the paper and think how his touch had rested there; to press it to her cheek and imagine that he had breathed upon it and his breath still lingered in its folds. She wondered what had been his sensations while addressing her—if a smile had played about his mouth, if his eyes had grown tender, if his heart had swelled toward her upon the rushing tide of love which had caught up her own soul, bearing it far beyond her control. Life grew dreamy. Her eyes fell upon Gonzalvo's stern face



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though the flashing sunshine of Belle-Isle's smile filled her eyes. But again she would hear, "I hate thee!" and his voice calling her in accents of insult, 'Enrique!' and there was no longer sunshine. Then she would press his note to her lips and fancy that it soothed her pain — that silent, cold, folded sheet!

One thought cheered her: she could obey a wish of Belle-Isle; she would do her utmost to save the Janssens from the Inquisition. But with what caution she must move! Scarcely had she had time to conceal the note brought by Rodrigo when Gonzalvo came upon them. That was the last time she ever saw Rodrigo. Yes, it would be very difficult — but the danger would prove her love. Chance came to her assistance. The natural son of the Duke of Alva, Don Ferdinando de Toledo, Grand Prior of the Knights of St. John, had conceived a warm liking for Count Egmont. Knowing Alva's plans to accomplish the Count's ruin, Don Ferdinando resolved to send him a warning. His experienced eyes separated Rosamunda from her associates, and he asked her to be his messenger. She agreed to warn Egmont, if the Grand Prior would promise to do his utmost to rescue the Janssens when they should come to trial.

Don Ferdinando stared and laughed. "We have two errands of mercy to interchange," he said. "So be it; I will save them if I can. And be sure thou tellest Egmont that it is I who send thee; show him this ring, and warn him that if he be found in Brussels to-morrow, he is doomed."

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Egmont, still trusting in Spanish gratitude, neglected that warning and the next night saw the beginning of his nine months' imprisonment. The news of his arrest spread consternation throughout the land. It was followed by the establishment of the Council of Troubles, known presently as the "Council of Blood." All other courts were abolished. It was given power to choose the mode of punishment, and to dispense with trials. The prisons became so overcrowded that it was convenient to try all the inhabitants of a town at a single sitting. Men and women were condemned by the hundred, and when there were not enough headsman, the wretches were tied back to back and drowned in the rivers. When Alva found this wholesale justice insufficient to fill the king's coffers, he pointed out that the Catholics owned vast riches. Philip thereupon caused the Holy Office to launch forth the most comprehensive death-warrant ever promulgated: without regard to sex, age, or faith, all inhabitants of the Netherlands were condemned to death.

In the meantime the towns had been garrisoned. Rosamunda and her father were first stationed at Antwerp, where Pacheco and Gabriel de Cerbelloni were building the great citadel. Later, they were sent into Holland to help crush the growing spirit of revolt. Months passed and Rosamunda heard nothing of Belle-Isle. She mourned as for a dead lover. When her father encamped in the open fields, she occupied an apartment in his tent; but in the garrisons she could not have a room to herself. She was forced to endure

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the company of the dissolute soldiers. They thought her sullen and morose. Sometimes they called her the little priest.

It was a terrible life to a sensitive spirit. Only her cold pride enabled her to endure it with a heart unbroken. How bright there shone against the curtain of her mind the image of Belle-Isle! Her hopeless love was the only light in her life. She called herself his Rosamunda. To him she unlocked her heart though he could not enter. The throne stood ready, but the king wandered somewhere in the world without his crown. Strange, that he could not hear the voice of her soul calling! Her spirit travelled to him across the spaceless distances of love, and held his hand, and whispered in his curls. Did he hear her silent voice?

The year had not travelled far into its spring, when muttering threats of war seemed to rise from the very ground. William of Orange was in Germany raising an army. His brothers, Adolphus and Louis of Nassau, were preparing to invade the provinces. Count Louis entered Friesland with the standard, "*Recuperare aut mori.*" The Dutch rallied about him. His forces were augmented daily by peasants unskilled in war.

Alva, infuriated by organized resistance while the land was reeking from inquisitorial executions, sent Count Aremberg into Friesland against Count Louis. Aremberg came upon the enemy at Winschoten. Here he paused, for the reinforcements which Meghem should have brought had not arrived. He possessed but four hundred cavalry, in which division rode Gonzalvo, fol-

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lowed by Rosamunda as his esquire. It was the twenty-third of May, 1568, nine months since she had last seen Belle-Isle. But that day of the first great battle between the Spaniards and the Patriots was destined to bring Belle-Isle and Rosamunda face to face.

## *Chapter Three*

### *ROSAMUNDA IN BATTLE*

**I**N the vast waste of watery pasture land, the patriot army occupied the only elevation. Aremberg led the Spaniards along the narrow causeway built through the swamps. Rosamunda, riding close behind Gonzalvo, reflected that if she were slain, her body would never be claimed, and she would escape that dark fate concerning which her father sometimes hinted with a look that tortured her heart. She would escape all, carrying down to death her love for Belle-Isle. But before she died, God grant that she might achieve a deed worthy of his admiration, — strike a blow for God and the only religion! As the air rang with the tramp of horse, her blood was stirred to wild enthusiasm. The saints were watching to see if she would help sweep from earth the curse of heresy.

They came to the end of a wood, and the narrow road stretched on through bright verdure toward the monastery of Heiliger Lee. The height, an artificial hill, was occupied by the rebels in two squadrons. Between the two armies lay the lowlands broken only by the causeway. The two squares of the Netherlanders stood im-

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movable. At first sight of them a shout burst from the Spaniards in which Rosamunda unconsciously joined. The furious desire to sweep forward upon the heretical foe, leapt like fire from breast to breast. To reach the hill, they must desert the causeway and traverse the meadows. Eyes turned to Aremberg in entreaty, the shouting was increased. Here, at last, were armed men to attack instead of women and helpless old men; they might not only do God a service, but win some glory on their own account.

Aremberg ordered his six cannons, christened "Ut, Re, Me, Fa, Sol, La," beyond the cover of the wood. Their deep booming stirred the blood to a fiercer fever. A body of light-armed troops against which the shots had been directed, wavered, and shout after shout rang from the Spanish army. Officers pressed about Aremberg, urging a charge. Not a shot came from the enemy. Aremberg, harassed by his officers, exclaimed, "The Duke has given me express orders not to engage the enemy until Meghem brings reinforcements."

"What cares Alva," exclaimed De Braccamonte, "so the enemy be crushed? Why share our glory with those who come after the toil is over?"

"They stand yonder, terror-stricken!" insisted Martinengo. "See! the light-armed troops are about to flee."

From the ranks came clamorous voices: "Sacramento! Santiago! Death to the Beggars!"

"But those green meadows are treacherous," cried Aremberg, desperately.

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"Thou art a stadtholder of this province," said De Braccamonte, insolently. "Art afraid of thine own land? We Spaniards are not afraid. Hear the common soldiers!"

"Let Count Aremberg consider," exclaimed Gonzalvo harshly, "that if he hesitate to lead us to certain victory, it may well be suspected he is in league with his countrymen!"

At that moment the cannons belched flame and the light-armed troops of Louis fled over the height of Heiliger Lee.

"It is because I know this country," said Aremberg with an angry flush, "and because I am faithful to Alva—"

"They flee!" cried the soldiers. "In God's name, why do we stand like fools when our victims are ready? Death to the Beggars!" There was an irrepressible movement forward.

"Your lordship," said De Braccamonte, laying his gloved hand upon Aremberg's arm, "hesitate, and your lordship will be trampled down by your own cavalry."

"Then let it be a charge," groaned Aremberg; "but God pity us all!"

The Spaniards rushed forward leaving the cannons unmanned. Aremberg waited with a reserve force, among which were Gonzalvo and Rosamunda. The latter sat her horse with bated breath, her naked sword grasped in her hand, ready to spur into the thick of battle under the especial protection of Heaven. She had



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already delivered the musket to Gonzalvo, who sat muttering curses upon his enforced inactivity.

The Spaniards had cleared more than half the space which separated the armies, and were thundering toward the foot of the hill with a hoarse unbroken yell of hate, when suddenly the entire vanguard half vanished from sight. A groan burst from Aremberg while those about him stared as if looking upon a miracle. But the Count knew what had happened. In the great holes left by the removal of huge squares of peat, water had collected. A green scum forming upon the malarious pools resembled fatally the short vegetation growing down to the margins. With that yell of hate the army had plunged into the death-trap. Man and horse fought desperately in the unstable mire of the fen, while the coating of green scum, beaten to shreds, showed black water closing over gilded armor.

Now at last the two squares of the enemy moved. The smaller vanished over the hill, as if to escape the sight of horror; but the larger rushed down the slope to the edge of the quagmire. The horses of the Spaniards uttered fearful screams as they plunged in the pools, grinding underfoot those troopers who sought to cling to their necks. Those not hopelessly disabled by the gelatinous mass that sucked at every foot touching it, threw away cuirasses, helmets, gauntlets; but when, freed from armor, they struggled out of the pitfalls, the Pikemen of Friesland pushed them back into watery graves, or crushed their skulls.

Count Aremberg gave the command to spur for-

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ward to the rescue. How eagerly that command had been anticipated, and with what dull hopelessness it was obeyed! Rosamunda, white with horror, kept near Gonzalvo, her eyes fascinated by the scene of death and carnage. But the advance was checked when the smaller square of the enemy fell upon their rear. Led by Louis of Nassau, it had made a *détour* of the hill. In an agony of indecision, Aremberg called a halt. De Braccamonte, seeing death on either hand, put spurs to his horse and fled, followed by his vanderas. His example proved infectious. A rout began. A great shout rose from the enemy in the rear, "Freedom for Fatherland and Conscience!" The pikemen, never pausing in their ghastly work along the swamp pits, answered, "Long live the Beggars!" In the Netherlands, Liberty had at last found a voice and a sword. Aremberg sat his horse like a figure of stone; flight meant for him either disgrace or death. That vanguard of his which had never known defeat was offering its diminished strength against Adolphus.

"Who is with me?" cried Aremberg. "Who will die for God and the king?" He dashed toward the conflict followed by only twenty horsemen, among whom rode Gonzalvo and his esquire. Before they could come up, Adolphus had put the vanguard to flight. Recognizing the leader of the onrushing cavalry, Adolphus selected twenty horsemen to oppose them, ordering the rest of his squadron to complete the work at the swamp-pits. Horse to horse, they met as if the days of chivalry in all their splendid folly had come again.

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Rosamunda found herself opposed by a burly trooper who, as he dashed forward, aimed a musket at her breast. She spurred her horse to a run, and swept toward him like the wind, while he checked his speed to make his aim sure. Just as his weapon rang out she swerved aside. At the same moment Adolphus fired his pistol at Aremberg. Rosamunda and her captain were uninjured. Her horse had not slackened his speed, and scarcely had the trooper fired when she was upon him; her sword found his heart and in her impetus it was wrenched from her hand. He fell to the ground with her sword through his body. Weaponless she wheeled in a wide circle, and returned to the battle in time to see Adolphus fall from a shot from Aremberg's pistol. Two esquires, eager to avenge the death of Count Adolphus, rode at Aremberg. With the same weapon that had slain their master, he brought them down. As one fell, he fired his musket wildly. The ball struck Aremberg's steed, and rider and horse were overthrown.

Some Spaniards who had contrived to escape from the fen, now hurried up, frightful with filth of the peat-bogs and blood from open wounds. The conflict widened. When Aremberg fell, Gonzalvo dismounted to his assistance, and with the aid of others, urged the wounded horse upon his feet. Aremberg mounted the bleeding steed, and was led forward. The horse advanced in an uncertain manner, staggered, and fell dead. Aremberg sprang clear of the falling body. Rosamunda, who had succeeded in throwing her horse upon his haunches, alighted and offered the Count her reins.

## ROSAMUNDA IN BATTLE

“Nay, little soldier,” said Aremberg with a ghastly smile, “save thyself.”

“Fool!” Gonzalvo whispered in her ear, “we live or die together!” A troop of Netherlanders was seen advancing and Aremberg was left to his fate. Rosamunda and her father joined the fleeing Spaniards. Aremberg took up his position beside the road, and calmly awaited the foe. Shattered by three musket balls, he fell, as the sound of a trumpet rose above the din of war. Meghem was approaching with reinforcements.

## *Chapter Four*

### *BELLE-ISLE SENDS FOR ROSAMUNDA*

**T**HE Patriots had won their first victory, but they were unable to pursue their advantage. The unexpected arrival of Meghem prevented the massacre that usually followed decisive defeats. Rosamunda found herself in the midst of a confused rout, soldiers bereft of armor, camp-sutlers wild with terror, hurrying to meet Meghem. Gonzalvo rode beside her, his face disfigured by a sabre-cut. He held to the wound the end of the red scarf which distinguished the Spanish uniform. The sun was setting. Rosamunda looked back for a last glimpse at the battlefield. Ever after, she carried that picture in her memory: corpses lying stark and bloody, some with the fading light upon their faces, others trodden to shapeless heaps. The victors were scattered over the field, examining the dead. On the spot where Adolphus of Nassau had fallen, a group of horsemen sat immovable, staring after the fleeing Spaniards. The sun threw their shadows in grotesque outlines far athwart the peatbogs. Beyond them rose the monastery of Heiliger Lee, stately and beautiful in the clear gold of the spring evening.

## NORMAN SENDS FOR ROSAMUNDA

When order was partially restored, the retreating forces were conducted to Zuidlaren. The town could not accommodate so great a force, and tents were pitched outside the city walls. It was night when the stricken army lay down to rest. Rosamunda threw herself upon the ground dressed as she was, a cloak wrapped about her. In the next apartment, separated from her own by a canvas, lay her father, delirious from his wound. His incoherent curses kept her awake. A physician of the city had administered a treatment as logical as it was unsuccessful. Reasoning that the cavalier had lost too much blood upon the side of his gashed cheek, the leech had promptly bled him upon his other side, to establish an equilibrium. As Rosamunda now listened to his groans, with which mingled the snores of two troopers who were acting as nurses, the sudden thought came that he might die. A light flashed through her soul at the thought. Perhaps he would die! Then —?

She was startled by a movement at the edge of the tent. A candle burned in the other room, and by its light she saw a human head, covered with matted hair, and a bristling beard, slip along the ground. She sat up, but her trembling lips refused to utter a cry. The head's eyes were wide open. The bristling whiskers parted, showing the red hollow of an enormous mouth. It whispered a name: "Belle-Isle."

That name dispelled the numbness of her terror. She started to her feet with a bounding heart; Belle-Isle had sent her a message! The head vanished and a huge arm, naked, hairy, and streaked with dried blood, came



## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

and went swiftly, leaving upon the ground a folded paper. She carried it into the next room, feeling something hard and round within: it was her ring. Standing with her back toward the unconscious man, she read:

*"Greetings to Señor Enrique de Oviedo y Varres, and now I call upon him to fulfil his vow and come to me, for the cause is urgent. He who bears this message is Hans Poot. Let this ring be a token. Come."*

It was Belle-Isle's writing. She crept back to her small apartment, and drawing aside the canvas, discovered the form of the Holland Wolf within reach of her hand. It was dark, but she recognized him as the one who had aided Belle-Isle in her escape through the palace. "Where is he?" she whispered.

"S-st!" said Hans hoarsely.

"How far away?" she persisted, in a low voice.

"S-st!" said Hans.

She stood irresolute, then returned for her cloak. She felt she could trust the Holland Wolf; besides, he could not know her sex, since Belle-Isle had sworn secrecy. The light from the other room showed her the red scarf of the Spanish uniform. She stepped outside the tent, whispering, "I will come."

Hans moved softly forward, his form towering high above her. It was the dark of the moon, but the sky's blackness was powdered with gems which glittered so brightly in their glory, that they had a little light to lend the dull earth. The tents were passed unchallenged. Rosamunda, strengthened by excitement, followed with-



## NORMAN SENDS FOR ROSAMUNDA

out a word, realizing the risk that lay in her absence from her father's tent. That absence, she believed, would last forever. Return? Why should she ever come back to her hideous life in man's disguise among dissolute soldiery? Belle-Isle had sent for her; she had already given him her heart, now she was taking her body; how much more slowly it travelled to the man she loved! Her heart leapt as if its prison-doors had been flung wide open and God were calling it out into the sunshine of liberty. It was no longer a dream of happiness, but happiness itself that swirled her thoughts upward upon wings of fire. Before her flitted the image of Belle-Isle, her pillar of fire by night, and she would have followed it in its golden radiance through the wilderness. Again she saw his face upturned as if to catch the light. Again she felt his touch and saw his lips tremble with a word of love. No need, now, to check that word, or guard against that touch; she was leaving all her past life to be his wholly until death. Suddenly she caught Hans's arm: "But why did he not come, instead?"

"S-st!" returned the other impatiently. They slipped through the semicircular rampart of wagons which bowed from one corner of the city wall to the next. They reached the edge of the wood, where two horses stood waiting.

"But whither?" cried Rosamunda, in sudden dread.

"I perform the stratagem," said Hans, in a hoarse whisper; "Belle-Isle may do the talking."

The name reanimated her resolution. She mounted and followed, a sword by her side, and at the end of the journey, — Belle-Isle! They galloped toward Heiliger

## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

Lee. Clouds which had banked up in the west fled swiftly across the sky before a rising wind. It grew very dark. The road, which at first had glimmered like the pale reflection of water in a darkened glass, was now lost from sight. Mile after mile was traversed, while the sky darkened, and a warm wind rushed through the vast solitude. In the north, a fitful lightning rested only that it might leap the higher. At last its light played upon a stately pile whose crown seemed reaching for the swelling clouds which billowed low. It was the monastery of Heiliger Lee. They held on their way, and when the lightning built for itself stairs of fire to climb aloft, they saw the battlefield. It was not deserted. Huge bonfires threw red glares upon dreamy tents.

A cry of fear burst from Rosamunda's lips. But they had reached the end of the journey. At the edge of the wood Hans halted, and in a hoarse undertone began the parody of the Lord's prayer: "*Helsche Duvel, die tot Brussel syt* —"

A voice interrupted: "Hans! did he come?"

"He is here," said Hans.

"Belle-Isle!" exclaimed Rosamunda, and her voice broke with a sob of happiness.

Belle-Isle found her hand in the darkness. "I knew I could trust thee to come," he said quietly. "Hans, lend me the horse, that we may converse equally. And return to the camp to warn me if I am missed."

Hans slipped to the ground and stole away. Belle-Isle, mounted and rode up beside Rosamunda.

## *Chapter Five*

### *THE MEETING IN THE WOOD*

**T**HERE was a muttering of thunder, and the wind caught a tragic note and held it. The lightning played in the north and south like beacon-fires answering each other. In this light the form of Belle-Isle appeared and vanished before Rosamunda as by magic. "I fear a storm is brewing," he said anxiously.

"But shall we care?" she answered softly.

"Thou art brave," he returned, "not to fear a storm. Yet I trust it is but the sullen humor of a night that cannot sleep in thinking upon the day's tragedy. But I have sent for thee, lady, in respect to a serious matter."

"Yes, Belle-Isle, as thou sayest, it is a serious matter; see — I have risked my life to come to thee."

"Surely I have asked much!" he exclaimed. "But the cause must justify me, lady."

"It does, Belle-Isle. But why dost call me 'lady'? It used to be 'Rosamunda.'" Her voice trembled with a little laugh of happiness. "Has my name grown so strange to thee?"

"In truth it is a sweet name, Rosamunda; and I shall think of it long after thou hast returned to thy father."

## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

She thought she had not heard aright. "After — when?"

"After thy return, lady. Hans, who has no suspicion that thou art other than a brave warrior, will take thee back in perfect safety."

The words came as a blow. She fell forward upon the saddle, her body reeling. Her face was white and stricken, but in the intermittent light he could not see her danger of falling to the ground.

He continued in a hesitating voice: "I do not mean to blame thee unkindly, lady, when I speak of Anna van der Loren." Her mind did not follow his meaning. It mattered not why he had sent, since it was not from love. She felt that she must fall and die at his feet. She would have shrieked, but her throat was dry. With cold, tense hands she clung panting to the saddle. He did not love her. He had never loved her. Now he was talking — how the words flowed in their musical course! "Consent, lady; it cannot matter to thee; it will matter so much to her."

What was he asking? She had but one favor to give him — herself. Oh, what folly had taken up its home in her breast? She had watched the flower of love grow up in her heart, filling her hours with perfect fragrance, like a plant pushing its way through the crevice of a prison floor. It had blossomed for itself alone. But Belle-Isle's message had flooded her soul with a hope so boundless that it rolled away into the domain of trackless thought, then poured back upon her heart, each little wave bringing a smile. That sea of throbbing

## THE MEETING IN THE WOOD

hope had swept her soul upward, and the music of its waters had found one sweet tone after another, each dearer than the last. Then she had heard his voice, and her "Belle-Isle!" had burst from a heart that had not room enough for all its happiness.

"Thou art ill, Rosamunda?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes," she gasped. "I am very ill. I was about to fall."

He cried out and caught her cold hand. "I fear the ride has been beyond thy strength, fair lady."

"No, not the ride. I was dizzy. I have heard nothing thou hast said, except that I am to return to my father. Señor, why hast thou sent for me? Señor! what am I to thee?" In her effort to speak without a tremor, her voice sounded with its old-time note of haughty pride.

"Thou hast heard nothing of Anna van der Loren?" he exclaimed uneasily.

"I only know thou hast spoken her name oftener than mine. What wilt thou have, señor?"

"Alas, lady, I beseech thy attention!"

"Señor, why art thou here? Art thou a prisoner on parole?"

"No, by Belle-Isle! I command a vander a under Louis of Nassau."

"Under Louis of Nassau?" she repeated in horror. "My God! thou art even a heretic and traitor!"

"But," he observed lightly, "that is nothing to thee, fair lady."

"Tell me thy wish, Belle-Isle. I listen."

"Dost remember our last meeting, Rosamunda?"

## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

"How well! Señor, I wear the cloak that was thine. When thy anger caused thee to say words that tore my heart, I drew this cloak about me in lieu of a dress, crying out that I, too, was a woman. The very cloak—for I never parted from it. Take it again, señor," she added, drawing it from her shoulder and throwing it upon his horse.

"I have been honored," he said gallantly.

"Yes," she answered, almost in a whisper.

"I referred to the last time we were together, lady. I carried Anna van der Loren to her parents' home; but her parents had fled that they might not witness her disgrace. We followed them afoot. She was such a dear child, so quaint and humble! We passed the nights at strange inns. I treated her as if she were my daughter. There were delicious adventures." He broke off as one scene after another flashed before his mind. He laughed softly.

"I listen, señor." Her cold tone aroused him.

"So we reached Leyden, where her father had settled—but think of that journey, all on foot, every day a perfect picture of joy! Her parents at last were convinced that she had been foolish instead of wicked. She lives with them now, but her heart she thinks to be broken, for she thinks of thee day and night. Oh, release me from my vow to keep thy secret! It cannot harm thee for little Bluemask, in far-away Leyden, to know thee as thou art."

"Thou dost not ask if I obeyed thy former request," she said slowly.

## THE MEETING IN THE WOOD

"What other request did I ever make thee, lady? Oh — the Janssens! True. Poor Wilhelmina! Didst thou save them?"

"I did all that I could. At that time, it was enough for thee to express a wish, and my heart leaped to obey. But I do not know if the Janssens were saved, for we left Brussels. But I persuaded Don Ferdinando to act for thee. We were very good friends, were we not? Didst thou not have kind thoughts of me in those days?"

"In truth, Rosamunda — but I hear Hans returning. In a word, may I undeceive Bluemask?"

"Señor, what is she to thee?"

"They inquire for thee," said Hans, hurrying up. "A nimble captain, by St. Bavon! There is to be a night council."

"In a word, fair lady —"

"In a word, No!" she answered fiercely.

"Rosamunda! In the name of our past friendship —"

"Never, never!" She wheeled about and struck spurs to her horse.

"Off with thee!" cried Hans, dragging Belle-Isle to the ground, and leaping into his place. "Back to the camp before thou art lost, Frenchman!" He spurred after Rosamunda. They exchanged no word except a brief parting at Zuidlaren as she dismounted.

With rapid stride, she gained her father's tent. As she drew aside the canvas and bent her head, an oppressive weariness came upon her. She stood in the room where she had thought never to stand again, and her past thoughts of happiness came to mock her in the



## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

leaden solitude of her life. What happy thoughts had died that night! A spasm of pain contorted her face. She threw herself upon the bed, and shook with terrible sobs. She sought to restrain her agony, but her control had at last given way. Her voice choked in desolate sorrow, — it struggled for words, then cried out heedless.

But her sorrow had a witness — her father. When she became conscious that her grief was audible, she started up and found Gonzalvo in the inner doorway, the candle in his hand. His face was white save for its deep wound. His eyes glittered dangerously, but no longer from delirium. He regarded the stricken woman with perfect intelligence, and with a purpose so secret and deadly that Rosamunda found strength to rise, and shrink to the farthest side of the tent.

## *Chapter Six*

### *THE REVELATION*

SHE stood like a hunted animal, shuddering—terror in her wide eyes. Gonzalvo was half dressed. The bandage was gone from the wound, though it had been bleeding afresh. As he held the candle, its light was upon his haggard face, but the piercing eyes looked through its halo and burned into her consciousness. He was rendered terrible by the expression of one whose white fury has temporarily driven the flush of fever from the face. The very hand that gripped the candle was as white as marble, and clawlike in its grasping tension. He was a man ill from loss of blood, but strong from passion. In his flaming eyes was written rage, and something else she did not understand. Not daring to move, she clung to the tent-wall, which shook in gusts of wind. He placed the candle upon the ground.

“So, we are back again!” he sneered. “We have wandered abroad. We have had our little secrets. Shall we not, some day, stretch our wings for a farther flight? We are weary of fighting for the king. In short, we are a little fool,—is it not so, Enrique?”

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She shuddered under his gaze.

"Before I explain what I want of thee," he continued, advancing a step, "it is well for thee to know I am not thy father, nor art thou a De Oviedo."

She quivered from head to foot as her eyes fastened themselves upon him with a sudden eager intensity.

He nodded sneeringly. "Yes, woman in man's clothes! I have never married. I loved her who is Josephine van der Loren. She, too, was a little fool. When thou wert an infant I carried thee off to a convent. She and Gerbrand are thy parents, and Anna thy sister."

By a great effort Rosamunda called the names of the troopers she had left in the other room. "Diego! Juan!"

Gonzalvo laughed cruelly. "Ay, Diego and Juan! Where are they? Searching for thee throughout the camp. I explained to them," he added slowly as if each poisonous word left a pleasant taste; "they know thou art a woman, pretending to be my son so thou canst live with me. When they return, they shall bring woman's clothes, and thou shalt say farewell to thy brave uniform. Henceforth, thou livest with our other women."

She grasped the canvas with a frenzied hand, but it was secured to the ground by strong stakes. He came nearer, his feverish eyes devouring her. "Dressed as a man, thou hast broken thine own sister's heart. In doing so, thou hast crushed the hearts of thy parents. When I send thee to them after I am done with thee,

## THE REVELATION

Josephine shall know that I kept my promise of revenge. Thy secrecy this night has hastened thy fate."

He sprang toward her with outstretched arms. Desperation nerved her to her defence. Her sword leaped from its scabbard. "Gonzalvo forgets," she cried, "that he has made a soldier of Rosamunda van der Loren." In that instant she renounced him, accepting the name that was hers by right of birth.

Gonzalvo thrust his hand into his bosom for his dagger, forgetting that he was but half dressed. As he groped madly, his hand bared his bosom. His revenge appeared so certain, as her slender form shrank away, that his reason was blinded. He saw her through a red mist; foam was upon his lips. With a reckless cry he rushed upon her to overpower her by the very force of the attack. The point of her sword touched his naked bosom. The sudden sting of pain brought him to himself and he halted with arms still extended, unable to fall back, for upon his soul fell the sudden horror of inevitable death. The next moment her blade pierced his body, and with a low groan he fell dead at Rosamunda's feet.

She glared upon his convulsed body still with the mad frenzy in her eyes, which had sent her sword through his heart to preserve her honor. He was dead — and she was free! She looked wildly about to assure herself that she was alone. Then, with desperate hand she drew the sword from his body. The blood rushed from the gaping wound, bathed his naked breast and ran down his neck, forming a pool about his head.

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She wiped the blade on the canvas wall till it was cleansed, then thrust it into her scabbard and fled.

It had begun to rain. The drops were large and few, but the wind cast them with such force that each seemed to find an echo. Rosamunda had but one definite thought, escape. Whither could she flee? She turned toward the rampart: beyond it was isolation. Day and night would she crouch in shadows and fens, with no Belle-Isle in her future. But two lights drew near. She stopped. The lights advanced. She glided to one side. The lights stopped. She tried to run and her foot slipped. She fell.

A voice accosted her: "Pardon, señor!" It was Diego.

"We have found thee, señor!" said Juan. Rosamunda staggered up, the red light upon her brow. Her eyes travelled from face to face as she grasped her sword: she was trembling as with an ague.

"It has been a weary search," complained Diego.

"Señor," said Juan, "thy father is in a most desperate mood."

"Yes, quite wild," said Diego. "When he came to his honorable self and found thee gone, he fell upon us with such manly blows that it made his honorable wound tear afresh."

"Yes, by Our Lady," Juan affirmed, "he bled more than we, señor! But we beseech thee, return."

"Come, then," said Rosamunda abruptly. She knew that Gonzalvo had not revealed her secret. No; now she understood that it had not been his purpose to

## THE REVELATION

reveal her sex, but to keep the threat of betrayal hanging ever over her head. As she realized the life to which he had devoted her in his mind, a faintness almost overpowered her, but the realization of her danger enabled her to stagger on to the tent. They entered Gonzalvo's apartment. "What have you done with him?" she cried, her excitement giving to her voice the ring of anger.

"Belike," said Diego, staring at the empty bed, "he hath gone forth to search for thee, señor."

"I left him delirious with fever," she returned, her nervousness strengthening the impression of fury. "Tell me where you have put him."

Diego looked at Juan. "By Our Lady," said Juan, "thou art as mad as thy sire, an it please thee!"

"Why have you taken the candle to my room?" she cried. "What deadly trick is this?"

Diego looked at Juan. "Some one has been here," said Juan thoughtfully. The troopers entered the next room. Rosamunda stood with a white face, leaning upon her sword. A sudden cry strengthened her to approach the partition. Juan held the candle; both were staring at the dead body. The sight of that corpse and a recollection of all that had happened brought a scream from Rosamunda's lips. She could utter no words to carry out her part, but with a trembling finger she pointed to the red streaks athwart the whiteness of the canvas wall. The limbs of the troopers trembled as they realized her meaning. Their hesitation helped her. "With his own sword," she gasped. She pressed

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her hand to her heart to still its throbbing. "Where is it hidden?"

"Mother of God!" cried, Juan rushing into the next room with the candle. They did not know that Rosamunda had left her sword upon the battlefield, and that she had been given Gonzalvo's. Diego looked at Juan. Juan glared into Rosamunda's immovable face, then into the red eyes of his comrade. Suddenly he threw the light upon the ground and trampled it out. Rosamunda heard them running away. She sank upon her knees and groped for the candle. She relighted it and placed it upon the ground where Gonzalvo had left it. Then she ran from the tent, carrying the picture of the matted hair dabbled in the red pool. As she ran, she cried the alarm: "Gonzalvo is slain! Help, help! Gonzalvo is slain!" From afar came the beat of horses' hoofs: Diego and Juan had escaped. There was a low rumble of thunder. The shower was over. The wind had banked up the clouds in formless masses, and in one place a small opening had been made. The planet Mars was visible through the aperture. It was as if heaven looked down through one red eye, to watch Rosamunda.



## BOOK III.—THE STORM RAGES

### *Chapter One*

#### THE PATH OF WAR

**O**NE afternoon near the end of July a Hollander with the ample girth peculiar to his race rode through a barren scene in Friesland. He was carried by a mule whose cocked ears evinced but too plainly the unconquerable spirit of liberty which comes from full feeding. The hot breath of war had breathed upon the land, and life had blackened and vanished in the flame of the dragon. The burly rider wore, in spite of the heat, a hood low upon his face. He had for a week passed through barren scenes where not long before happy homes had sent up the smoke of peace. Now, look where he might, all was a desert. Here and there he discovered charred skeletons in the ashes, and, along the road, naked bodies which for days had lain under the July sun. The traveller urged on his mule, for death was in the air.

Suddenly he started in wonder as there came to him the sound of laughter. The mule, not waiting for orders, hastened across the blasted meadows toward the sound. The earth dipped, and revealed a canal along which grew

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a strip of green. Upon the margin a crowd had collected, their miserable rags proclaiming them not Spaniards but his own countrymen. A young man stood singing in a rich, clear voice, while before him sat a semicircle of children sprinkled with a few old women and two men who propped themselves upon rude crutches. The singer wore the red scarf of the Spanish uniform. His song was a merry one, and he smiled as he tilted up his face toward the light. It was a beautiful face, the face of Belle-Isle. The children gave but a hurried glance at the new-comer, then glued their eyes on the Frenchman. At the end of the verse Belle-Isle paused, and approached the rider. "This is a strange sight," he exclaimed, "a well-fed man upon a sleek mule. By Belle-Isle, these starving Dutch may feed their eyes upon thy fatness! Thy name, I pray?"

"I heard there had been a battle," said the other slowly, "but he who sold me this mule at the Zuider Zee said nothing of such desolation. I rode hither without question, for speech is the frailty of women and the folly of men."

"There were two battles," said Belle-Isle. "But thy name, I pray thee?"

"I took ship at the Maas, and came up the North Sea; hence I was cut off from this news."

"The rout was on the twenty-first. Hast thought of thy name? I am Belle-Isle, at thy service. Come! be at mine!" The traveller drew his hood from his face. "Jan Janssen!" exclaimed the Frenchman, grasping his hand.

## THE PATH OF WAR

"We are well met," said Jan. "There was a mistake in Brussels."

"But where is the beautiful Wil— I should say thy adorable father!" cried Belle-Isle, beaming. "Where is Vrouw van Boendale and her illustrious ancestor?"

"There was a mistake in Brussels," repeated Jan, shaking his head solemnly.

"My old Jan! This seems too good to be true. Wilhelmina is somewhere in the rear, I warrant me! Hans Poot will be here soon; he has gone foraging. By Belle-Isle! what a large husband Kenau will have, when she is a married lady! Dost wonder," he dropped his voice, "to see me consorting with these half naked and altogether uncleanly miseries? Not long since those children saw their parents treated as I have not the heart to describe. Yonder ancient women were spared on account of their ghoulisn ugliness. Oh, Jan, a woman can be so ugly!"

"There was a mistake in Brussels," said Jan.

"Jan, knowest thou Jemmingen on the bank of the Ems? We were posted on the narrow peninsula, the river on one side, a great bay on the other. We were ten thousand. There came against us only fifteen hundred Spaniards, and we came out of strong fortifications to engage them. I was captain of a vander. I saw half of my command fall, and not one Spaniard was slain. We held on, furious to find ourselves unable to cope with so small a force; but our men were untrained. Patriotism is worth most in defence. No heart was ever so strong with the consciousness of right, that a sword

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could not stop its throb. Then, suddenly, Alva appeared with his reserves, — thousands upon thousands. They poured down upon us, threatening to trample us to death by their irresistible onrush, and we became panic-stricken. We deserted our trenches and rushed to the water's edge. Louis of Nassau ran among us, entreating with tears. But death was rolling toward us. He sprang to the five cannons and fired them off one by one, — the only time they sounded that day, till the enemy seized upon them and turned them against us. And then the destruction was terrible. Bilder helped strip Count Louis of his uniform, and those two plunged naked into the Ems. I do not know what became of them. Hans and I swam to an island in the river. Many of our men, stripped of arms, joined us. From the island we watched the scene of horror. Not a Dutch prisoner was spared. I have since heard that seven Spaniards were slain in all; and of us, seven thousand! If this country ever finds liberty, I think it will not be at the point of the sword. Hans and I swam ashore that night and made our way through the enemy's ranks; the red scarf of the Spanish uniform protected us as it did at Heiliger Lee. Terrible crimes followed that defeat. The enemy spread over the country: no house was left standing: not one woman preserved her honor, nor a man his life, save here and there a wretch left for dead beside the corpses of his loved ones."

"I had three daughters," spoke up an old woman. "Two were married. The other was so beautiful, — she was a mother's dream, come true."

## THE PATH OF WAR

"And I had a brave son," said a cripple; "Jacob Klaaszen. Belle-Isle knew him. Belle-Isle says he fought terribly at the Ems."

"Ay," said Belle-Isle, winking at Jan, "he was an awful warrior!"

"I am all there is left of us," said a lad. "They tore out my father's heart; I saw it. I am ten, and Belle-Isle says I shall soon be a man."

Jan said, "There was a mistake in Brussels—" But his voice choked.

"Thou art the same Jan," cried Belle-Isle, "thou takest root to a thought and drawest out all nourishment before one can transplant thee. Let us leave that mistake in Brussels, for yonder comes Hans Poot."

"Ay, here I come," shouted the shaggy giant, approaching with great strides. "Food for the little ones! Spread the table and set the chairs!" The next moment he recognized Jan, and, throwing his bag to the women, rushed to his embrace. "A star has fallen out of heaven. Thou brother of Wilhelmina! Where is my love, Jan?"

"Ay, get that from him," Belle-Isle nodded his head; "he has stuck on Brussels and can get no farther."

"We have lived in Zutphen since our escape from the Inquisition," said Jan. "Only Kenau's father was detained in Brussels, and I went thither to learn his fate."

"Well—quick,—how fares it with Father Joost?"

"I purchased this mule to return to Kenau with the tidings: and behold, in the midst of this desolation, I find Belle-Isle, singing songs!"

## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

"That is a stratagem," said Hans, with a grin; "I made it. We appear gay for the sake of these homeless ones. Didst hear my jests as I came up? Didst hear me tell them to spread the table?"

"In truth," said Belle-Isle, "I marked the jest."

"The ground is our table, already spread with grass," Hans explained. "Yet I said, 'Spread the table.' Markest the wit, Jan?"

Jan looked at the Holland Wolf doubtfully.

"Furthermore," continued Hans with zest, "I bade them set their chairs; it made little Meijer Dirk laugh outright. Didst note that jest of the chairs?"

"By Belle-Isle, friend, it would have made the devil laugh!"

"Well," said Hans, uncertain of this compliment, "it does not take much to do that. The devil is no solemn gentleman, at his best."

"Where are these chairs?" demanded Jan, looking about.

"That is the whole matter," said Hans in elucidation. "There is the jest; there are no chairs. There is no jest in truths; it takes a lie to make a man laugh."

"But Father Joost?" demanded Belle-Isle.

"He was burned. I am taking Kenau the news. I heard him singing hymns above the roar of the flames."

Hans groaned, then cried out, "Oh, when Bilder and I go forth once more to battle!"

"I thank God," said Jan, "that they had not invented the new gag when Father Joost was burned. It is thus: the tongue is bored with a hot iron, and a thong holds a

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stick in the aperture, till the tongue, swelling, holds it there of itself. That is to prevent heretics from preaching as they are dragged to the scaffold. If Philip knew what outrages were committed in his name, would he not come to our rescue?"

"God save the King!" cried the cripples, pausing in their repast.

Jan nodded. "So Count Egmont cried to the last."

"What! did they destroy Egmont, one of the truest Catholics who ever lived?"

"He wrote to the King the morning of his execution," pursued Jan, "and signed himself thus:

"*'Ready to die, this 5th June, 1568,*

*'Your majesty's most humble and loyal vassal and servant,*

*'Lamorel d'Egmont.'*"

"God save the King!" cried Hans, but Belle-Isle shuddered at his voice. The little children took up the words in a shrill chorus.

"Come, let us eat with the others," said Hans, with a lowering brow, "we must on to Zutphen. I pray heaven that Bilder got Louis of Nassau safe to Germany, and that they may soon return with a fresh army. War, war!" he cried, raising his clenched hands above his wild head. "Vengeance for our women! Vengeance for their fathers and husbands! Vengeance for the innocent children!"



## *Chapter Two*

### *HANS POOT ATTEMPTS STRATEGY*

**A**FTER the meagre repast, the little party went forward, Jan insisting that the oldest woman should ride his mule. "She is a safe beast when started," he asserted. "Sometimes she is reluctant to start. In that case one must run with her a bit and leap upon her back while she is in the heat of motion." The mule had better grace than to put the old woman to such pains, but ambled off patiently, her alert ears saying to the world, 'A full stomach and a light back!'

One of the cripples hobbled up to Jan's side. "Please your worship, hast heard of one Jacob Klaaszen?"

"Why callest me thus?" returned Jan. "I am no more a worship than my mule."

"Nay, your worship, whoso rides while others walk has six legs in his retinue; he is my masterful worship."

"Not so!" exclaimed Belle-Isle, "for whoso walks has the whole world at his feet. But of course Jan has heard of thy terrible son."

The father's eyes danced. "He was a fearsome warrior! I saw him torn limb from limb before his wife's

## HANS ATTEMPTS STRATEGY

eyes; but he was terrible. Belle-Isle knows how he fought at Heiliger Lee !”

“ By Belle-Isle, he was awful! When Adolphus was slain, fifteen Spaniards stood guard over the corpse. But up rushes this Jacob Klaaszen.”

“ Fifteen?” said Hans Poot doubtfully. “ Can a mortal man overcome fifteen Spaniards?”

“ There were fifteen,” said Belle-Isle resolutely.

“ Bethink thee, Hans,” said the anxious father, “ do not make them less, good Hans. Yet this morning there were but eight.”

“ Belle-Isle is right,” Hans exclaimed. “ There were fifteen. Then up rushes thy son, out flashes his sword; two heads roll to his feet. Now there are ten.”

“ Nay, thirteen,” Belle-Isle interposed. “ But quick as a flash we have another head off, two hearts pierced, another head brained, a fifth wretch despatched; now there are eight left.”

“ This is quick work !” cried Hans. “ Patience, Father Klaaszen, we shall presently have them all slain. Then he fires a musket; the ball goes through one body, comes out, and slays another who is trying to hide from this angel of death.”

“ The others were paralyzed with terror; their legs were like wax. Thy son took from each his weapon and with lightning rapidity slew eight more.”

“ Thereupon,” cried Hans, “ he drew his dagger —”

“ Nay,” interposed Belle-Isle, “ they are all slain.”

“ By St. Bavon, there is one left for this dagger !”

## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

"Good Hans," said Belle-Isle peevishly, "they are all despatched. I have kept count."

Jan spoke. "It was an imperfect reckoning, however, for I have summed up seventeen corpses that these fifteen Spaniards left upon the field."

Hans glared at the Frenchman. "Why didst thou not leave me a Spaniard for this dagger?"

"All Holland shall hear of this deed," cried the old father. "There is nothing left for me in life but to go to and fro, spreading the fame of my dead son!"

At night they came to a deserted cabin where they decided to pass the night, for Zutphen was still two days distant. About midnight Jan slipped to Hans in the darkness and shook him gently. The Holland Wolf started up with the quickness of an old campaigner. "Come outside," Jan whispered, "and wake not Belle-Isle!" It sounded like a stratagem, and Hans silently obeyed.

When they were some distance from the cabin, Hans Poot inquired, "What is thy plot, brother of Wilhelmina?"

"Ay, Wilhelmina is the cause," said Jan. "Let us sit and discuss at our ease."

"Not so, Jan; he who sits to plot a plot, plots for his enemy. What of Wilhelmina?"

"Soon Belle-Isle will see her."

"Ha!" exclaimed Hans. "Oho!"

"And she will see Belle-Isle."

"She will see naught but a Frenchman, Jan."

## HANS ATTEMPTS STRATEGY

"Look thou, Hans Poot; ever since we were loosed from the Inquisition, Wilhelmina has worn a look."

"She has worn what, Jan?"

"A look."

"Now what means this symbolical attire?"

"Hans Poot, there is a spark in her eye. I tell thee, the breath of Belle-Isle will blow that spark to a blaze."

"A blaze? My Wilhelmina in a blaze?"

"Love," said Jan.

There was silence; then Hans said, "He and I have been comrades. When we first met after our long separation we came together to fight, for so much he had promised. But I must have been very weak that day, or perhaps the devil had time on his hands and took a turn at me. I know not. But he struck my sword clean from my hand. Then dost think he ran me through with his blade?"

"We must devise some way of keeping him from my sister," said Jan; "thou art a man of subtlety."

"I say, Jan, thinkest he spitted me with his sword?"

"I have often heard thee boast," Jan pursued his own train of thought, "that thou canst fashion cunning devices."

"Dost thou think," cried Hans, raising his voice, "I say, dost think he killed me upon the spot?"

"I think nothing of the matter," returned the other impatiently, "but if thou speakest so loud, he will come forth thinking my mule has lifted up her voice."

"Then I tell thee," Hans lowered his voice, "that he did *not* slay me, but embraced, instead, crying that it

## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

was no fault of mine; as certainly it was not. But I love him for that, Jan; I cannot kill him."

"Now who wants him killed, Hans Poot? I am a man of peace. But thinkest thou he has in him the stuff whereof good husbands are made?"

"He shall never be Wilhelmina's husband!" Hans asserted roughly. "He would break her heart—to say naught of Bilder's. Jan, he is but a breeze that kisses one flower after another, then is gone his way."

"Kisses?" Jan repeated with disrelish.

"Ay, kisses, Jan. Wilhelmina is as true as the compass before Columbus took it to America. Speak not of marriage between a star and an ocean wave."

"But Hans, what if she embark upon this wave?"

"By St. Bavon, he shall never have her!" cried the Holland Wolf. "His affections go trooping along, slaves to his errant fancies. Even these toothless old crones of our company,—they be women,—that is enough for Belle-Isle. And the little girls who are not too ugly,—he has no stomach for the boys,—those little girls he kisses on their dirty mouths. It is so pitiful to see the lads looking up to him for a smile; but no, they be males, he heeds them not. Now, Bilder knows I am a man of strategy. I follow him in straight roads; but when we come to crooked paths, he clings to my skirts. Let us flee to Zutphen this moment. When he finds us gone, his pride will turn him from Wilhelmina's door."

"I like this plot," cried Jan; "no more words!" Jan hurriedly got astride of his mule and Hans trudged along by his side. When they had gone some distance the

## HANS ATTEMPTS STRATEGY

rider dismounted, insisting that Hans should take his turn. Hans mounted; but the mule had lapsed into one of her quiet moods and she would not start. Hans, according to Jan's directions, ran down the road, pulling the animal by the bridle, while Jan rushed ahead to encourage her. "Be ready to vault upon her at my word!" panted Jan. He was a swift runner in spite of his flesh. All went at a smart trot, Hans keeping one hand upon the mule's back.

"She is working up finely," gasped Jan; "every muscle is limbering. Be ready. Now—LEAP!"

At that instant the mule stopped. Hans would certainly have alighted upon the beast had she been where she should. As it was, he sprang upon Jan and rode him to earth.

"The saints looking down!" exclaimed Hans scrambling to his feet. "Jan, have I killed thee?"

"I think it," said Jan feebly. He could say no more, for those three words used all the air left in his great body.

"I will kill that beast!" roared Hans.

An unexpected voice exclaimed, "What! has the Holland Wolf turned soldier against mules? Then I come as reinforcements. Take her in the rear, Hans. I will make a sortie upon her vanguard."

"By St. Bavon! It is Belle-Isle!"

Jan staggered to his feet. "Why," he said, regaining his breath by slow degrees, "art"—a long puff,— "thou—here?"

"And why thou?" retorted Belle-Isle? "Ha, ha!

## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

All three play the same game!" He began to laugh but could not stop. "Oh, Jan! Oh, Hans! Who would have suspected this of you?"

"Suspected what?" demanded Hans sheepishly.

"Now I said to myself, 'Belle-Isle, let us run away from these miserables and leave Jan and Hans as partners to their misery!' It was a noble thing to collect and herd together those homeless ones, but why make a noble deed common by long continuance? One must be brave to begin a kind deed, but one must have patience to stick to it. Behold! you two were fleeing even as I fled! Now no one stands guard over those tears and sorrows! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let us return," said Jan abruptly.

"Think what thou mayest, Belle-Isle," said Hans. "Back we go; our flight is over."

"What say you," cried Belle-Isle, "let us all three run off!"

"Back we go!" said Jan, mounting cautiously. "We cannot desert the helpless in affliction— She moves! she moves!"

"Hurrah!" cried Belle-Isle cheerfully. "The fleeing army rallies. Forward, Jan; forward, Hans; forward Belle-Isle!" They returned to the cabin. Two days later they reached Zutphen. The fugitives were given in charge of the burgomaster, while Jan conducted Hans and Belle-Isle to his father's house.



## Chapter Three

### THE SPARK IN WILHELMINA'S EYE

**I**N answer to Jan's knock, his father opened the door. "It is Jan!" shouted Hendrik, throwing his arms as far around his son as they would go. "Jan?" echoed the voice of Wilhelmina from within, "give him to me, father."

"I am here, too," shouted Hans, "will I not do for thee, Wilhelmina? Good Jan, do not blockade the door with thy body."

"My brother is safe!" cried Wilhelmina, laughing and crying on Jan's shoulder. Jan pushed her gently away and discovered Kenau standing beside her aunt.

"Come, Kenau," he said gently, and led her into the next room. When the door was closed upon them Belle-Isle told the news of Joost's martyrdom. Vrouw van Boendale sat with hands covering her face, while her old friend Hendrik bent over her, his hand upon her head. Wilhelmina advanced to Belle-Isle, presently, her hands clasped. She was very pale and tears shone in her eyes. It suddenly occurred to the Frenchman that perhaps she was beautiful, after all. "Belle-Isle," she said gently, "thou hast much to forgive me." He did not know to

## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

what she referred, for he was not one with whom the past lingers. He looked at her blankly. "Forgive what, lady?"

"My treatment of thee when last we met."

He tried hard to remember, but his mind was hazy in regard to Wilhelmina; he had thought of other ladies since their parting. "I know not thy meaning, Wilhelmina. But I know thou art the prettiest maid I have espied in many a barren day."

"Thou seekest to spare my pride," she said softly. "But many a night have I wept because I insulted thee. Thank God, now I have this chance of suing thy pardon."

"Yes, Belle-Isle," spoke up Hendrik, "and all escaped except dear Joost." Vrouw van Boendale sobbed.

"Ah," said Belle-Isle slowly, "we were in the prison,—it is true. My heart bled for thee, Wilhelmina. I thought by preserving my liberty I might obtain thine."

"Alas!" cried Wilhelmina, "we heaped reproaches upon thee, thinking thee a traitor. And all the time thou, in pure innocence, wast devising our happiness."

"Why, how it all comes back!" said Belle-Isle, his face lighting up. "I had forgotten thine unkind words, Wilhelmina. Truly, thy reproachful look did not stick in my memory so long as it takes my mind to turn over; that is no lengthy period."

"As we stood before the Blood Council," said Hendrik, "it needed but a glance into the faces of Juan de Vargas and Del Rio—the only ones who can vote

## SPARK IN WILHELMINA'S EYE

—to know our verdict. The clerk called a list of fifty whose trial was set for that day, but De Vargas at each name said, 'He has already been strangled,' and Del Rio would laugh. When they came to us, De Vargas swept the manuscripts containing the evidence into a great basket, crying, 'What shall we do with them?' Hessels, our own countryman, started from a heavy sleep, crying, 'To the scaffold!' Then it was that the Grand Prior, Don Ferdinando, rushed into the room, crying us very good Catholics. And so we were, — but I cannot say so much for ourselves, now! But Joost would not be saved. He cried out that he was a reformer, and would give his life as an argument for his cause."

"That was a course such as I might choose — in a sudden heat of enthusiasm," cried Belle-Isle.

"Noble Belle-Isle!" exclaimed Wilhelmina, her eyes burning, "how I have misjudged thee! Thou hast not treasured my wicked words against thee! Thou art better than I."

"Say not so," shouted Hans. "He cannot think of a thing long enough to clamp it upon his memory. That is why he forgot thine unkind words."

"Peace!" cried Wilhelmina sternly. "His nature is above thy comprehension."

"Now that is true," exclaimed Belle-Isle. "I did not know I was so noble in heart. But it was generous to forget thy look. Surely there is a different stuff in me from that whereof other men are made!"

"Thou hast a noble heart," said Wilhelmina, extending her hand. He kissed it eagerly and a blush swept over

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her face as she looked down upon his curls. Hans groaned.

"Dear Hans," said Wilhelmina, suddenly turning to hide her confusion, "I have given thee no greeting, for the news of Father Joost saddens our eyes even to the face of a friend. But here is my hand."

"Give me the other to kiss," said Hans. "I will not take the hand Belle-Isle has mumbled. Oh, what a little hand, and how sweet it tastes! By St. Bavon, it reminds me that I have not supped this day! Dear Wilhelmina, hast aught in the house by way of victuals?"

"How thoughtless we have been!" she exclaimed.

"A cold roast?" he asked gently; "a ham?"

"There is a fine joint of meat, Hans."

"An onion?" he insinuated. Belle-Isle groaned.

She glanced at the Frenchman doubtfully, then said, "I am afraid there are no onions, Hans."

The blood rushed to Belle-Isle's face. He had gained a step in a new conquest.

In the meantime Jan and Kenau had entered a square room, low ceiled with polished wood. The bayed window was open, and a fragrant breeze puffed at the billowing curtains. Though the sunlight had vanished, the wide-awake July day refused to darken its candle and retire. It loitered in the streets and threw its light upon Kenau's face, showing Jan the only woman he had ever loved. She kept her eyes upon his face; why did he not speak? Was her father still in the

## SPARK IN WILHELMINA'S EYE

dungeons of the Inquisition? She wished to put the news from her as long as possible.

"Jan, I have grieved because I let thee go to Brussels. If evil had befallen thee, I should have been the cause. I thank the good God thou art safe with us!"

Jan regarded her in solemn wonder. Was this the coquette who had always laughed at him? How changed she seemed! "Kenau, I bring thee news from Brussels."

"Yes — but do not tell it yet. Jan, I have been so unkind to thee, yes, for years I have put thy words aside with cruel mirth! But my heart never laughed with my lips, Jan. I know thee well, thou steady, trusty friend. Didst hear of my father?"

"I heard. I do not bring thee glad tidings."

"Of course; what glad tidings come from Brussels? Is not my father a brave man? When we took advantage of the Grand Prior's aid, dost recall how my father stood forth, crying, 'I am of the reformed religion'? I had not courage to step to his side — to be strangled in a barrel on the scaffold — I thought of that. But my father feared nothing."

"He was very brave, Kenau; brave even to the last."

"Yes, first and last he is Joost van Boendale. And I am his daughter, — a glorious thought! But I have not treated thee as becomes his daughter. I shall never hide my heart from thee again."

"Think not of me," groaned Jan, "for I must tell —"

"Not yet. Oh, see how bright is the world. Let us

## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

not bring sorrow into it. This breeze reminds me of the seaside where we built dykes as children, my father looking on. Has he come to trial?"

"He was condemned, Kenau."

"Of course. But we cannot tell what will happen. Perhaps Don Ferdinando — He would like to live here in Zutphen. Your father says he can have the little room over the upper balcony."

"He will never come to thee," said Jan.

"Never, Jan? But, oh, he must come; I have no one to protect me but my father. Some day, Jan? Never?" She put her arms about his neck and sobbed. "Jan — I know. But let us not speak the words."

Jan rested his hand upon the bowed head. A great light had entered the inner chamber of his heart where for years fear and self-distrust had held close the blinds. But he did not slip his arm about her nor bend to kiss the white face that rested against his shoulder. He stood in silence, his hand upon her hair as a father might have soothed his child. For this was Jan; not Belle-Isle.

## *Chapter Four*

### *THE WINNING OF WILHELMINA*

**A**BOUT a month later a small, sleek mule bearing a man of enormous proportions, drew near the bridge leading over the Yssel to the gates of Zutphen. The man was Hans Poot, and one could see at a glance that he had worked harder than his beast, to advance upon his return journey. At the foot of the bridge the mule suddenly stopped. With a horrible growl the Holland Wolf dismounted. "Out of my way!" he shouted to the foot passengers; then, grasping the bridle, he bent his head, and prepared to rush forward. At that moment a firm grip caught his arm. With an angry shout Hans wheeled about and confronted his old comrade, Bilder Kopperzoon.

They fell into each other's arms. "Thou shaggy dog!" cried Hans in a rapture, "I feared thou wouldst not come to do me battle. But Count Louis?"

"Safe in Germany. Not come to-day, thou beef-headed wolf? Well, in the battle of the Ems, I feared I should not be spared to slay thee. But God feeds us when we make our own dough. Where shall we fight?"



## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

"There is a lovely spot in yonder grove. Let us not enter the city, but to it with stout hearts."

"My fancy jumps to catch thy words," Bilder declared. "I love thee, Hans, but thou must die for Wilhelmina's sake, thou bristling boar!"

"Not I," grinned Hans; "I will lay thine uncombed dog's head where it will never whimper for Wilhelmina again. Let us walk, for that will best please my mule. Jan sent me to Delft for a bit of china for Kenau: he loves her very well. I am just returning. Now, if I fall, wilt take to him the gift?"

"Fear not, Hans, I will take all thy possessions. Nobody will ever miss thee. I would I could snatch the plots out of thy brains also."

"Ay, Bilder, but a man's plots die with him."

"Well, Hans, they never came to anything."

"True," said Hans. "When put into practice they brought us ill, but in the devising they warmed our fancy. Draw thy sword: Wilhelmina to the victor!"

In the grove they embraced in loving farewell. "Would to heaven, Bilder, a plot would come to prevent this duel. Why not draw straws for Wilhelmina, — the biggest straw to the husband?"

"Thou uncouth Dutchman!" said Bilder. "Could either of us endure life seeing the other married unto her?"

"I suppose," said Hans doubtfully, "it would break the heart of the one with the short straw."

"Of course, thou blockhead! Couldst eat thy victuals while thinking of me a-kissing my wife Wilhelmina?"

## THE WINNING OF WILHELMINA

"I suppose such thinking," mused Hans sadly, "would take strength out of the hottest onion that ever held heat in its bowels. Well, fall to, thou rugged old lumbering Dutchman, and pray God for the long straw!" Their swords clashed.

"Stay!" suddenly came a voice. "By Belle-Isle, cannot the Spaniards kill us fast enough? Death has many friends in Holland!"

The combatants paused. "Away, Belle-Isle!" said Hans peevishly, "we are but getting heated to blood-spilling, when thy icy voice comes like a cold hand down the collar."

"Back to thy convent!" shouted Bilder.

"But do not kill Hans," cried the Frenchman, "for I need him to go upon a journey."

"Go upon thine own journeys!" retorted Hans. "We have met to fight for the sweetest maiden that ever cooked a dainty mess for hungry friends. Come on, thou dough-face, thou trowsled Bilder Kopperzoon!"

"A moment!" shouted Belle-Isle, beginning to laugh.

"Hans," said Bilder, "let us stand him between us and thrust at each other through his body."

"Bilder Kopperzoon," cried Hans indignantly, "art thou a maker of plots, or am I? Thou knowest nothing of stratagem and this plan of thine is folly."

"Then plot me this fellow's head off his shoulders," retorted Bilder, "or I will make an end of him without plots, Hans Poot!"

"Belle-Isle," said Hans, "explain thy laughter, or receive a hole in the other side of thy head."

## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

"In truth, Hans, I think it a merry thing that you should fight for Wilhelmina, who has for five days been my very dear wife."

"Thy wife?" they cried together.

"Ay. This journey to Delft was but a device to get thee away; for we thought the wedding-supper would prove for thee one meal too many."

Bilder turned upon him a haggard face. "The love she feels for thee is thy safeguard. But God pity Wilhelmina! By St. Bavon! if thou ever bring sorrow into her life —"

"Nay, friends," said Belle-Isle, quietly, "why should I ever give sorrow to my wife?"

"Thy wife!" Bilder growled chokingly. He turned suddenly and fled from the grove.

"Thy wife!" echoed Hans. "I also would rush away, did not this accursed mule plant her legs toward the four points."

"Dear Hans, hear me. Wilhelmina is my wife, so think of other women, for the world is running over with other women. Wilhelmina sends thee a request: wilt, for her sake, go to Leyden in behalf of a poor damsel who is also a pretty damsel, yes, a sweet child such as I — I mean — But it is best for thee not to see my wife just yet."

"What of the damsel, if it is Wilhelmina's wish?" said Hans sullenly.

"Her name is Anna van der Loren, — I have spoken of her to thee as Bluemask. Her ways are so winning! A Spanish soldier stole her heart, for she was too young

## THE WINNING OF WILHELMINA

to build a tower of wisdom to defend her love. Now I have discovered that this Spaniard is but a disguised woman. I was forced to make oath I would not reveal the secret, so even now Anna thinks her lover a man."

"And did they marry?" inquired Hans.

"Not they. Wilt go and undeceive Anna? Yesterday came permission from the Spanish lady, so I am released from my vow. See!" Belle-Isle handed the other a parchment.

"These marks," said Hans, "are written words, I warrant me."

"Of course. Wilt undeceive the poor maid who thinks herself in love, and cannot be comforted?"

"I have not been in this world for nothing," said Hans, staring at the parchment, "I know writing when I see it."

"But hast thou read the message, Hans?"

"Not I; if thou standest there till I do we shall have Wilhelmina a widow. What have I to do with reading, when I can get any bare-legged mendicant priest in the land to read me to sleep?"

"This is the writing, Hans:

"*Tell her all.*

"*Enrique.*"

"I will go, Belle-Isle. Write a letter making all plain. Ah, how impatient was I to return home where there is so much happiness, — for other people!"

"Courage, good Hans, here is the letter, which I have already written dear Bluemask, — so dainty a flower! — the innocence of her child's heart gives fragrance to

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her wildest behavior. Go, Hans, and take hope. Everything ends well, at last. The world is full of other women ! ”

By the time Hans reached Leyden, a journey of fifty miles, the eccentricity of his mule had done much to accustom him to the thought of Wilhelmina's marriage. He learned in Leyden that Gerbrand and Josephine were gone to Delft to consult a physician in regard to their daughter. There was some hesitation about admitting Hans on account of his wild looks, but he gained admission by stating that he came in Belle-Isle's name. He was conducted to Anna, who sat in the garden surrounded by those Holland flowers which were the envy of Europe. She had already sent her attendants away, but when she caught sight of the gigantic Hans, crowned by bristling locks, she darted timid glances which caused the Holland Wolf to wish himself gentler of aspect. She was so wan and slight that his heart ached for her.

“ Lady,” he tried to speak softly, but the hoarse growl caused her to start up in alarm, “ be not afraid of poor, harmless, good-natured Hans Poot, who never killed a fly without first suffering tortures from its tickling legs. Be seated, — I bring good news. Dost still fear poor Hans? It is a joke of Holland how one may cuff me without drawing one blow out of my fist.”

“ Forgive my alarm,” she answered trembling, “ but my parents are absent, and — and I beseech thee come no nearer — I am such an invalid — forgive me. But, — good news?”

## THE WINNING OF WILHELMINA

"Ay, delicious. I will kneel here in the grass; who fears a man when he is upon his knees? Here, take my stick, and when terror knocks at thy heart, whack me athwart the cheek: thou art pining away for want of exercise."

"I am foolish to fear so kind a messenger. But is the news of — of — of —"

"Of that very one, that Enrique de Oviedo."

"Oh, tell me what good news can come of him?"

"Why, have it then; he is a woman and that is the point. Heardst ever the like of such joyful intelligence?"

"A woman! Nay, nay, Enrique is no coward."

"Coward or no, he is a maiden, so thou canst not continue to mourn for him, since he is she."

"God defend me," murmured Anna, "he is mad!"

"I tell thee," cried Hans, "that Enrique is no more a man than I am a woman. Enrique is a plot, — Oh, that I had thought of it! But why dost look upon me as if I were a Spaniard? Read Belle-Isle's letter, then laugh with me. Thou wilt not pine for a woman, I trow. There was never a marriage in the world, but some man was mixed up in it. Read me this letter, — I pray heaven Belle-Isle has slipped no words therein to do mischief!"

It was a long letter, setting forth Rosamunda's life-story. Anna's face whitened with the first lines. Presently the sheets dropped from her hands. She started up with a cry, tottered, and fainted in Hans's great arms.

"Varlets!" shouted Hans. "Help, ho! Thank God

## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

I never learned to read ! ” Servants ran to his assistance. “Nay, nay,” cried Hans, “I will carry her ; lead the way.” Not daring to interfere, they led him to her bedroom. He placed the fragile form upon the bed with the tenderness of a woman. “Now get your restoratives,” he ordered, “and fear not; I have given her a strong medicine, but it will cure her when it begins to work. When does her father return? ”

“This afternoon, your worship.”

“I shall wait for him in the garden.”

Hans retired to the bench where he had first seen Anna. “I do not understand myself,” he reflected. “Why aches not my heart for Wilhelmina?” He smote himself vigorously upon the breast. “It aches not. I dare say Bilder is groaning out his heart for her. O Wilhelmina, so skilful in cookery, so strong and sturdy ! O Wilhelmina ! ” He smote himself again, then looked up with a wrinkled brow. “It aches not.” He rose. “Now would it not be well to marry —— a dainty maiden that one may carry? But hear my words ! They must contain wisdom, for a rhyme was born without a poet for its father.” He strode to the house and called the seneschal. “Good seneschal, I pray thee,” said Hans, “send one of thy varlets with me to direct me to a barber.”



## *Chapter Five*

### *JAN STANDS BY WILHELMINA*

**A**BOUT a month after Belle-Isle's marriage to Wilhelmina, Jan Janssen determined to ask Vrouw van Boendale for her niece's hand. Jan imagined himself already a partner in his father's house of merchandise, accumulating riches for Kenau. She would continue to live in Hendrik's home, but she would be Jan's wife. There was a difference.

He found Vrouw van Boendale alone and said at once: "I want to marry Kenau."

She was not displeased. "I have long observed, Jan, thy attachment for my niece. I know not what she may say —"

"I know well enough," said Jan, sorry to have her waste words. "All I ask is thy consent."

"I grant it freely, for thou art as a son, Hendrik as a brother. Well, well, I shall live to see my last relative taken from me, but I shall not despair. The memory of my illustrious ancestor has lifted me over many a dreary hour. I say to myself, 'I am descended from Jan von Boendale; I must prove worthy of my descent.'"

## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

One cannot tell through life what sorrow is hid around the corner; but one has always one's illustrious ancestor. Nobody can take him from me. Ay, Jan, go to Kenau."

Jan put off going till the next day because he disliked haste. That night, as he was passing through the darkened hall, some one threw her arms about him, and sobbed convulsively upon his bosom. It was Wilhelmina. Jan was not one to voice surprise. He opened his mouth, but held his breath.

"Oh, my brother!" gasped Wilhelmina.

"What is it?" he asked in a fierce whisper.

Her form shook harder as she drew close to his breast. "Jan! Oh, brother, thou wilt never desert me? Stand by me, Jan, always, always!"

"Like a rock!" said Jan.

"Thou faithful Jan! Thou hast but one sister. Thou wilt not desert her?"

"Always count me one for thee!" cried Jan, bewildered. To himself he said, "It must be Belle-Isle!" She left him in silence, and on the morrow appeared as usual. From that time Jan watched Belle-Isle. All dwelt together. The Frenchman had nothing of his own to live upon, except his happy disposition. Hendrik, who had conveyed the greater part of his wealth from Brussels, had purchased the stock of a Zutphen merchant; it was his hope that his son and son-in-law would continue the business when Time should seek to buy with the promise of restful years his consent to grow old. As all sat in a semicircle about the hearth

## JAN STANDS BY WILHELMINA

Hendrik hinted often that Belle-Isle would do well to visit the shop, and learn to direct the apprentices. But Belle-Isle would listen with a far-away look in his eyes; when his wife touched his hand timidly, he would start as if recalled from a dream. In the September afternoons he spent hours upon the Yssel wharves staring into the river.

Jan did not speak to Kenau, and he pretended not to notice the wistful glance that visited him after his conversation with her aunt. He was standing by Wilhelmina. He discovered that the Frenchman was growing thin. Wilhelmina one night tried to persuade him to eat more. Her manner was timid.

"I am never hungry, now," said Belle-Isle, kindly. He rose from the table, though he had but just seated himself, and started from the room. Then he came back and rested his hand gently upon his wife's head. A blush of pleasure spread over her face and neck. Jan caught his breath and looked at Kenau. Hendrik smiled at Vrouw van Boendale. Suddenly everybody was happy —

Except Belle-Isle. After supper they gathered about the fire, for in that land it grows cold when the September sun sinks into the sea. Hendrik dwelt upon the time when Jan would oversee the selling of merchandise and Belle-Isle go on trading expeditions. Belle-Isle stared into the fire.

"He will see the gay world," said Vrouw van Boendale, "and I know he will take Wilhelmina with him." Wilhelmina gave her husband a timid glance, but he did

## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

not see it. "But they must be careful lest the weeds of earthly pleasure choke up their minds. It is bad religion to be too happy."

Wilhelmina touched his hand; he took it, but did not look round. "When my husband lived," continued the old lady, "we were fearfully gay. We went to balls, and thought nothing of staying up till ten o'clock at night, yes, ten o'clock! Sometimes we did not arise till the sun had set us an example!" She sighed. "But I have a comfort, Belle-Isle."

Belle-Isle dropped Wilhelmina's hand and looked about uneasily.

"Yes, a comfort. When I remember those wicked gayeties—nobody dressed finer than I—nobody gave more sumptuous banquets than my husband—wines, rich liquors; when I would pine for the past, I remember my illustrious—"

Belle-Isle moved restlessly.

"Ancestor. I recall the glory of the author of 'Brabantsche Yeetsen.' I say to myself—"

Belle-Isle arose. "I know thou sayest wise words to thyself, but pray excuse me,—a faintness—" He left the house with rapid strides.

"Oh, he is ill!" cried Wilhelmina, clasping her hands.

"I will seek him," said Jan. He hastened after the other and overtook him in the street. "Stay!" he cried, grasping Belle-Isle's arm fiercely, "what is the matter with thee?"

"I know not, Jan; I am ill."

"Then what art thou ill of?"

## JAN STANDS BY WILHELMINA

"Life, Jan; life makes me ill. It is that illustrious ancestor," cried the Frenchman wildly. "I say that illustrious ancestor is wearing my soul to the last threads. And thy father's talk of my being a merchant. And our sitting like owls in a semicircle every night."

"Brother, what has made thee ill?" demanded Jan in a voice of amazement. "What talk is this?"

"Let us return," said Belle-Isle resignedly. "Thou hast come for me, take me back. I am no free man."

"But what is the matter?" persisted Jan.

"By Belle-Isle, I have been a fool — a fool, Jan!"

"Yes," cried Jan, losing his temper; "and, by Belle-Isle! thou art still in the character."

The next day Belle-Isle informed his wife that he was about to set forth upon a journey. As he kissed her with more than usual tenderness, the tears rushed to her eyes. "Oh, my husband!" she cried, clinging to him, "tell me what has changed thy heart; it used to be a home of sunshine."

"Alas, Wilhelmina, I have not changed," he said gently.

He rode to Leyden. He desired to see little Blue-mask again, because she was a part of his past — that past which seemed brighter and brighter as the present days placed their dull histories beside its romance. After he had talked to his little friend, and sported in the charm of her innocence, he would return to Zutphen and resume his duty. He was not in thought untrue to Wilhelmina, but his nature demanded a holiday.

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It was a beautiful afternoon as he slipped along the flowering hedge of the familiar garden which he had often visited before his marriage. Gerbrand and Josephine sat upon a bench, watching their daughter with silent pride. Occasionally they would look at each other, as if to say, "She is our child!" Belle-Isle resolved to enjoy the scene before making his presence known.

Anna sat upon a rustic seat, — but how different from the old Bluemask! How bright her face! Laughter flashed in her eyes. Her little mouth, red and teasing, showed little pearls. Belle-Isle's heart leaped. At Anna's feet lay an uncouth form whose face was ever turned up toward hers. It was Hans Poot, but he showed a great change; his hair and beard had been cut. Belle-Isle groaned. He was as large as ever, but instead of his leather jerkin he wore the suit of a burgher.

"We shall see then," called Anna, leaping up — oh! how like a little fairy!

"What is it, darling?" called Josephine fondly.

"Hans says he can run as well as fight!" returned Anna. Josephine looked at Gerbrand, her eyes saying, "What a marvel!" Gerbrand nodded emphatically. Anna ran down the path, swift as a flash of light. Hans followed as close as a shadow. Not far from Belle-Isle he overtook her and caught her hand. They struggled in the bushes.

"Just the hand!" cried the Hollander. "I only want to kiss the hand."

"No!" cried Anna, trying to wrench away.

## JAN STANDS BY WILHELMINA

“Just the hand, Anna! Thy hand is so far from thy mouth, thy mouth should not say nay — it is no concern of thy mouth.”

“But my mouth will call my father if thou —”

“Hear a secret, Anna,” whispered Hans hoarsely. “The Prince of Orange has brought an army into the country. To-morrow I leave to fight the Spaniards.”

“Oh, Hans! thou wilt not go to the wars?”

“Surely. But may I kiss thy hand farewell?”

“I do not want thee to leave us, Hans.”

Belle-Isle slipped from his hiding-place, and after a brief stay at the inn, set forth upon his return journey. His heart was dancing. “War, war!” he said to himself, “there is my remedy!”

William the Silent had declared war, not against King Philip, but against Alva. Now on the borders of Brabant he was rallying about him the boldest spirits, exhibiting the motto, “*Pro Lege, Rege, Grege.*” Hans and Belle-Isle once more found themselves comrades. Wilhelmina grieved for her husband, but not as she had sorrowed before his departure. Sometimes only a parting can tell us that we are loved. “Jan,” she said, one day, “Kenau looks very sad.”

“Perhaps it is her way,” said Jan.

“It did not use to be. I never see you two together. Jan, dost thou not love Kenau?”

“Love is a strange mystery,” said Jan.

“Sometimes she watches thee, Jan, as if expecting thee to speak, and her face burns and pales. And Vrouw van Boendale also seems to look for some explanation.”



## THE HOLLAND WOLVES

"Women are strange mysteries;" said Jan. Wilhelmina kissed him. Rumors of war came with every breeze. William the Silent had endeavored twenty-nine times to come to an engagement, but Alva had determined not to fight with the patriots, but to crush their enthusiasm by delay. There were numerous engagements between detached troops, but only one severe skirmish, and at last the Prince of Orange was obliged to draw off his forces into Germany. A fugitive who had been wounded on the Geta reached Zutphen in October, bringing news of Hans and Belle-Isle. They, with Bilder, had won great renown for daring. The soldier spoke of Belle-Isle as having a charmed life. "But have rumors come of the little soldier?" asked the fugitive.

"We have heard of the Spanish devil," said Hendrik; "he must be a fearful creature for his slight size!"

"But tell us more of Belle-Isle," said Wilhelmina, whose eyes glowed like coals.

Hendrik winked at the fugitive and said, "She is his wife."

"Saints of heaven!" cried the stranger, "that Belle-Isle rushes into the thick of battle, and proves that he has no love of life!"

A shadow fell upon Wilhelmina's face.

"Nay," spoke up Jan, "that is no reason for his daring. But the husband, by his courage, throws glory upon his wife." Wilhelmina patted Jan's shoulder.

In November Hans Poot burst into Hendrik's home with a beaming face. "Look at me!" he cried; "do I

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come like a heart-broken lover? By St. Bavon, I could kiss Wilhelmina from brow to chin and never feel a thrill! But I must on to Leyden," he said, after their eager greetings, "for I find a many thrill there? But where is the heart of fire?"

Wilhelmina became as white as death. "Oh, Hans, where is my husband?"

"Not here yet?" stammered Hans, "why, he had a day's start. I stayed to comfort Bilder, who still sighs for thee; I took Belle-Isle's place that he might the sooner greet his wife!"

Winter came, but nothing was heard of Belle-Isle. Wilhelmina believed him slain in some obscure engagement. She mourned as for the dead. "Jan," she said, more than once, "speak to Kenau, now. I will not have two hearts broken on my account."

"There is no haste," he would answer. On returning from business he always took the seat next Wilhelmina. In profound silence he would sit holding her hand, sometimes stroking it gently. Sometimes she would rest her head a long time upon his shoulder and look at the dancing flames.

The next spring Hans encountered Jan on an Yssel wharf. "Well met," said Hans, who scorned the foolishness of hand-shaking. "I bring news. S-st! Belle-Isle is alive! Bilder, who is in Paris, scraping together a vandra, saw him. Had he known there was a desertion, he would certainly have killed him!"

"I wish Bilder had known," said Jan.

"Belle-Isle was a terrible fighter," sighed Hans Poot.

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"He is a villain, the black-heart!" hissed Jan.

"I would I could say nay to that," Hans answered.

On his way home, Jan met Kenau in the garden. She called him and he stopped, looking down; but his heart leaped toward her. At first she was pale; but when she spoke her face flamed. "Jan, I have been talking to my aunt."

"That is always a privilege," he responded solemnly.

"I know what thou saidst nine months ago, Jan. . . . Wilt thou not tell me now?" Her voice broke.

"Where is Wilhelmina?" cried Jan hastily. She did not answer, but her eyes were fastened upon his face. "Kenau, Kenau," he said huskily, "do not speak to me, — I must go to Paris." He hurried into the house.

He went to Paris and after four months returned with no tidings of Belle-Isle. The next year was the great Holland flood in which one hundred thousand perished. In 1571, King Philip ordered Alva to send an assassin to England to kill Queen Elizabeth. In the year following was the St. Bartholomew massacre; the same year witnessed Belle-Isle's return.

He had been gone three years, and during his absence the overwhelming misfortunes of her people had partly saved Wilhelmina from the sting of personal sorrow. She received her husband without reproach, but her old sunny smile was seen no more. Yet she did smile, for he was repentant; but the light upon her face was as sad as it was sweet. He did not enter into the particulars of his absence. He had lingered in England until

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the edict drove him thence. He had made many friends, but they had been friends of a day. In his freedom he had not been happy, for Wilhelmina's face had pursued him and a consciousness of her shame had shamed him to return. Everybody was sorry to see him come back except his wife and Jan. The latter did not speak to Kenau; still, he would wait. The Frenchman felt the chilling disapproval, but there were compensations; he was no longer treated to Vrouw van Boendale's illustrious ancestor; Hendrik did not scheme to place him in the shop; there was no sitting about the fireplace in dull content.

Belle-Isle became possessed with a passionate desire to regain Wilhelmina's admiration. He looked toward the war as an opportunity. The Netherlands, submissive under every ingenious cruelty that Alva could devise, had rushed to arms under the new tax demands. One may see one's kindred burned for heresy, but when one's property is unjustly taxed, it is time to resist tyranny. In the spring the Netherlands obtained their first permanent victory. Brill and Flushing were captured, and many towns, Zutphen among them, displayed the banners of William of Orange upon their ramparts. But the spring, bright with hopes of liberty, was succeeded by a tragic autumn. The Spaniards had not been paid for a long time, and Alva gave them the city of Mechlin as a reward. For three days the city was abandoned to lust, fire, and cupidity. The women who fled to the altars, or hid in the graveyards, were at the mercy of infuriated men. The most beautiful

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maidens were sold in the streets at the tap of the drum. Neither Catholic nor Calvinist was spared.

Belle-Isle was changed. He no longer carried his face up-tilted as if to catch the light; song did not burst unconsciously from his throat. Sometimes he drew his wife to his side in silent remorse. Then she would tell him again he was forgiven. He knew if he should desert her and stay away until her hair was white, he would receive the same welcome. She no longer regarded him as something superior to her life; her old manner had returned, as if she would protect him. The maternal air refined her expression, making it resemble the faces of the saints in the frescoes of the cathedral. She felt that she stood between him and her father.

But to be admired was the life of Belle-Isle; therefore he could not be happy. One day Hans appeared at Hendrik's and called Jan to one side. "Comrade, this horror of Mechlin has strangely depressed Anna. She has lost all her pretty ways. Wilt thou not bring Kenau to Leyden to make her a visit and cheer her heart?"

"Hast thou Anna's love?" asked Jan.

"I have not asked," said Hans, nodding his head; "that is my little stratagem, — to see how *thou* farest."

"But I have great cause for delay," said Jan.

"So have I; the reason that the maid may say nay, I am so big, she so dainty; the Holland Wolf, the little fairy. Why! I was but telling her how Bilder tore out a Spaniard's heart, fastened his teeth in it, then threw it to the dogs, crying it too bitter a morsel for his

## JAN STANDS BY WILHELMINA

stomach. 'Ha, ha, ha!' said I. Now, what thinkest? She fainted away! I pray thee, bring Kenau to Leyden that Anna may get back her old spirit."

So Jan took Kenau to Leyden; but though he found the journey too short a delight, he uttered no word of love. They had been gone from Zutphen several days when the Janssen household were startled by the sudden entrance of Bilder Kopperzoon. He heeded not their cries of welcome, though he had not seen them since Wilhelmina's marriage. "The army is coming!" he cried hoarsely. "The Spaniards are upon their way hither — Don Frederick himself. Where is Jan?"

"He is in Leyden," said Wilhelmina, holding out her hand in greeting.

Bilder looked at Belle-Isle through his red eyes. "Canst *thou* do aught?" he demanded, not heeding Wilhelmina. "Is there anything in thee, Belle-Isle? The city must be fortified. Come!" He rushed from the house.

Belle-Isle's eyes were like stars. He threw his arms about his wife crying, "Now, thou shalt understand me at last! Thou shalt know Belle-Isle!"

## Chapter Six

### ROSAMUNDA'S VOW

“**H**ALT! Who goes?”  
“A Fiend de Oviedo.”  
“Advance in the fiend’s name,” cried the sentry. “Is it thou, Cristoval, fresh from the Duke of Alva? I would as soon think of stopping the fiend himself!”

The messenger disappeared in the night, and the sentry turned to his companion. “These Fiends de Oviedo are well named; they are one-half Spaniard and one-half devil. That makes a warm mixture, Toledo!”

“And their captain,” Toledo acquiesced, “he is so delicate, one would think him better fitted to be a page in some señora’s anteroom.”

“Ay, he is small, but his fury is all the hotter for being packed tight in so slight a case. Thou didst not see him at Hermigny.”

“Nay, but thou hast related the tale so often, I will go thither upon a pilgrimage an thou spare me this once.”

“I shall not spare thee. William, the arch-traitor, lies in Hermigny with his army. Don Frederick calls



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for volunteers to make an escamisada upon the Dutch (whom the saints confound!), and the Fiends de Oviedo volunteer to a man. With our shirts drawn over our armor, we steal into the sleeping camp, six hundred of us — ”

“ Hold, comrade, *thou* art not of that company! ”

“ I say not I was one of them; I say only that for three hours we did naught but cut the throats of sleeping men. Toledo, heresy received a wound that day! Enrique de Oviedo led us here and there where the most blood could be spilt, then, standing with folded arms and that terrible look upon his beautiful face, he whispered ‘ Kill! ’ But all the time he was looking for the Prince of Orange. They say that heretic was saved by his little spaniel, which scratched his face, waking him just in time to escape, half-dressed, upon his horse.”

“ It is very true,” observed Toledo, staring through the gloom at the invested city of Zutphen, “ that the captain of the Fiends de Oviedo is beautiful.”

“ Ay,” responded the sentry, “ as beautiful as a woman. His father was a great warrior, son of that Gonzalvo who fought battles with his pen. Wait till yonder city falls; then thou shalt see something of De Oviedo’s awful zeal for Mother Church! ”

In the meantime Cristoval had borne Alva’s letter to Don Frederick. The commander read it with stern pleasure, then handed it to his captain. “ Inform thy company,” he said with a smile.

Rosamunda read the brief message, and her eyes glittered. “ For God, the Church, and the King! ” she

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exclaimed in a thrilling voice. She sought her quarters with a rapid step, and summoned her men about her. It was the fourth night of the investiture of Zutphen, and thus far there had been no hostile demonstrations on either side. The flare of the torches illuminated her beautiful face in high contrast with the savage countenances of her command. They hated the men behind yonder rebellious walls of Zutphen, and in mad ferocity were eager for blood; but she hated the evil she believed to reign in their hearts, and she was cold, stern, and eager for her religion. Since her father's death, her one purpose in life had been to strike against heresy. Nothing but religion now swayed her faculties and desires — except her love for Belle-Isle.

It was years since she had seen him last, but she had not forgotten his most carelessly modulated tone. He was canonized in her heart. She had forgotten all that stood between them, and it was her delight to think that somewhere in the world he lived and loved her. Surely he had been converted to the true faith! She resolutely clung to this belief, for it alone gave her the right to love. On learning that Anna van der Loren was her sister she had sent Belle-Isle permission to tell her secret. She did not know whether or not her messenger had ever found the Frenchman. Nor did she expect to see Belle-Isle again.

“My brave warriors,” she said in the clear voice that had often sounded the charge, “hear the command of the Duke of Alva. When we gain Zutphen, every house is to be burned to the ground.”

## ROSAMUNDA'S VOW

There was a shout.

Rosamunda continued: "Not one man is to be left alive in the city. Not one child is to be spared."

The shouts became deafening. "A De Oviedo. Long life! Long life to the Fiends de Oviedo!"

Rosamunda silenced them with one motion of her slender hand. "This city has dared oppose the march of the truth of God. Swear with me by the Holy Crucifix, that when we gain that city, mercy shall be shown to none."

They held up their hands and made the oath, their eyes catching fire from hers.

"I swear," cried Rosamunda, "to shoot down without mercy any of you who is found aiding an inhabitant of that accursed city, whether man, woman, or child. Now make a like oath; swear to slay me instantly if you find me showing mercy."

"We swear!" they cried. "A De Oviedo forever!"

## *Chapter Seven*

### *FOR WILHELMINA'S SAKE*

**I**N Leyden, Kenau and Hans sat with Anna van der Loren and her parents as guests. "It is a marvellous thing," Hans was saying, as he smote his knee with his huge fist, "because it grows not common, though one think upon it always. The little soldier a woman! Why! I have seen him leading in a charge, — I cannot call De Oviedo she, it were to affront the language, — he was riding a white horse upon us as if an angel of death."

"Unnatural woman!" cried Anna. "She sought to break my heart. But mother — but father — you have forgiven!" She grew pale, but Josephine folded her in a close embrace while Gerbrand looked upon the picture as if he had painted it. Anna looked up: "She is neither man nor woman, but a fiend, — does she not so call herself?"

"I know not," said Hans, "but others call her so. And as Bilder is my friend! I have seen one of the Fiends save his life by receiving the bullet meant for Enrique. Now I believe though the Fiends do not know their captain by their wits to be a woman, her sex is communicated in some blind sort, so they be all in love

## FOR WILHELMINA'S SAKE

with her, yet think themselves in love with war. But they are no more in love with war than Anna is in love with me." Hans glanced quickly at Anna to see the effect of his subtle stratagem, but her face was hidden upon her mother's breast. Hans thought it wisest to change the conversation, and sought for the pleasantest thing to say: "Kenau, when do you and Jan marry?"

"Never," said Kenau, flushing angrily; "but it is none of thine affair, Hans Poot!"

"Nay, maiden, I ask in all humility of spirit, yet for a certain reason. Be a friendly lass, and tell me if he has yet asked thee to marry him."

Kenau started up crying, "I did not come to Brussels to be insulted."

"Hans!" exclaimed Anna, running to Kenau, "I do not like thee—thou makest war upon women like a Spaniard!"

"Oh, Anna!" wailed Hans, "oh, Anna, do not say it. If thou dost not like me I will make war upon myself. Oh, Anna!"

"Cheer up, Hans," said Gerbrand, "take not her words to thy heart, for they were meant to go no deeper than thine ears."

"She does not like me," groaned Hans. "But why? If Jan has not asked Kenau to marry him, can she help it? Why did Kenau get angry? She may marry Jan if she gets the chance, and if she gets not the chance, is that her fault? Do I blame her? But Anna says she does not like me!"

"Say no more, Hans," said Josephine kindly, "the

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more thou sayest, the less likely art thou to mend matters."

"Dear lady," cried Hans, "tell me the right words to say, and I will make a song of them and never leave off singing. If Kenau is waiting for Jan to speak, let her be of good cheer, for it is working, it is working; I have observed that he is coming to the point!"

At this moment Jan entered the room, and Kenau forgot her embarrassment at sight of his excited face. "Jan!" she was beside him in a moment.

Jan spoke: "The Spaniards encompass Zutphen."

There was an alarmed cry. Kenau said, "And thou, Jan?"

Jan nodded. "Wilhelmina is there," he said.

"But Jan," faltered Kenau, as they looked into each other's pale face, "if they surround the city — Oh, Jan! thou wilt not throw thy life away? Thy sister would not want thee to come to thy death."

"Kenau," said Jan, taking her hands, "farewell!"

"Anna," said Hans, "farewell. If Jan can leave Kenau, I can leave thee. Farewell, Anna."

"But, brave lads," cried Gerbrand, "this is madness!"

"I will work up a stratagem," cried Hans, suddenly beaming. "We will kill a couple of Spaniards, crawl into their uniforms, and enter Zutphen in disguise. Pray God we may not burst the uniforms when drawing them over our bodies!"

"I have ordered five horses to be at the door in a twinkling; two for me and Hans, three to be led for Wilhelmina, our father, and Kenau's aunt."

## FOR WILHELMINA'S SAKE

"What of Belle-Isle?" inquired Hans.

"Let him run on his own legs," said Jan; "they be practised in the art!"

"Dear Jan, dear Hans," expostulated Gerbrand, "what can you do with these horses if the Spaniards surround the city?"

"I shall do all I can," said Jan, "and leave the balance upon God's shoulders."

"But not until we have tried a stratagem," said Hans gleefully. The horses were heard at the door.

Kenau clung to Jan. "I see thee for the last time," she said. "Hans is a Holland Wolf, but thou a man of peace. Thou wilt be slain. But thou shalt not go; it is a crime!"

"Take good care of Kenau," said Jan to Josephine.

Kenau uttered a loud cry. "Jan! Let me tell thee Wilhelmina's desire; that thou and I — she has often told me — and thou canst not save her by going. Stay for the sake of thy sister's wish — and mine."

Jan released himself, and seizing Hans's arm, rushed into the street. They leaped upon their horses and dashed away, leading the other three. Spurring through the western gate of Leyden, they took the road that led to Zutphen, fifty miles away.



## *Chapter Eight*

### *BELLE-ISLE PROVES HIMSELF*

**W**HEN the rumor spread throughout Zutphen that the Spaniards were approaching, a resolution was adopted, almost unanimously, to resist the entrance. It was such a resolution as comes in rare, electric moments, when life seems meaner than a patriot's death. Bilder Kopperzoon rehearsed the fate of Mechlin: so would it be with the wives and daughters, the old men and children of Zutphen, if the gates were thrown open. The Dutch burgomaster shouted from the wall to those demanding the city keys, "We stand for King Philip and the Prince of Orange, and so, with God's help, will continue!" The city was invested. The Dutch had as brave hearts as ever defied a foe, but, with that marvellous love of caution and imperturbable slowness of action peculiar to their race, they had neglected all means of defence.

On the first night Belle-Isle volunteered to slip through the enemy's ranks and go to Naarden for soldiers and powder. Other volunteers were called for, since there was a great probability of the Frenchman's

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losing his life in the venture, but no others were found. Bilder would have gone had not a schism suddenly been discovered, — a minority which at first had been silent began to speak in favor of opening the gates and trusting Spanish mercy. To counteract the growing alarm which sprang from the mere presence of the invaders, the Holland Wolf must remain. Some of the burghers smiled sardonically when Belle-Isle was mentioned. "He will never return," they said, "even if he escape through the Fiends de Oviedo. It is his purpose to run away and desert his wife again!" Still, no other volunteer was found, and he was commissioned.

When he went home to tell Wilhelmina good-bye, he stepped as he had not for years, so springy was his tread. He told her in few words, holding her to his heart. "Thou hast quite forgiven me?" he whispered.

"Long ago, my husband."

"There yet remains that thou shouldst understand me," his eyes sparkled. "Wilhelmina, the wretch that deserted thee was Belle-Isle, but he who offers his life for thee and this city is still Belle-Isle!"

"Now I shall be proud of thee," she said.

"There was another," he murmured, "I mean — a maiden. I could not drive her from my fancy. Oh, I could not, though I knew her heart was cruel. But there was something about her. . . . I have not seen her since our marriage."

"Did she love thee, Belle-Isle?"

"She? She knows not how to love. When we married, I thought I hated Rosamunda. But I was mis-

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taken. Those years I wandered, — her face haunted me; I was a haunted man. I saw her face and form, go where I might. She was very beautiful.”

“I was never beautiful,” said his wife.

“No,” said Belle-Isle; “but to me thou hast grown lovely. The thought of Rosamunda’s look and voice and hand no longer stirs a cruel pain in my heart or prompts me to flee the imprisonment of walls. All that is past, and my happy dreams are of living with thee alone, — just Wilhelmina and Belle-Isle, never burdening our minds with the low and vulgar question of making a living. Next to living with thee, the best thing is to die for thee. Bid me go forth and prove myself thy knight.”

“Go!” said Wilhelmina, smiling through her tears.

That night he was lowered over the wall. It was the third night of the new moon and very dark. Bilder promised to have the rope ready at the same place every night until Belle-Isle’s return, — or the city’s fall. Four days passed and nothing was heard of the Frenchman.

“He has run away from his wife,” sneered some; “we were fools to think he would come back to this death-trap!” Others said, “He is in the hands of the Spaniards. They will impale him before our eyes.”

Those in favor of capitulation grew bolder. Bilder would have had the malcontents imprisoned, but he found they numbered almost as many as his own party. On the fourth day Don Frederick sent a messenger to the burgomaster stating that orders had been received from Alva to spare all the inhabitants if they would

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throw open the gates. The burghers prayed for another day to consider the proposition, and their petition was granted. Don Frederick was well content to wait another day, thus saving the expense and labor of a siege. The inhabitants watched that evening's decline with a hope that scarce dared give itself its name; while the minority dwelt upon the folly of resistance without ammunition.

When at last the Spanish camp slept it was very late, and earth and sky were dark. Bilder upon the wall crouched at the appointed spot, holding the loose rope. He was not alone. Behind him stood all the male inhabitants of Zutphen, breathless with suspense, tortured with dread. Had Belle-Isle been slain? Had he deserted? Suddenly the Holland Wolf felt the rope jerked from below. He whispered to the burgomaster, and the news spread. From the densely packed throng burst a half-audible sob. Many hands pulled at the rope, and presently a man stood beside Bilder upon the coping. It was Belle-Isle. Bilder embraced him, saying in a choking voice, "Thou art worthy of her!"

By a prearranged plan, all rushed to the city hall. The red glare of torches fell upon Belle-Isle's white face as he addressed the audience. "Men of Zutphen," he said, lifting up his face in his old manner, and speaking distinctly and quite simply, "I reached Naarden, I begged for men, powder, supplies, — anything to help us keep our women from the Spaniards. As for us men, we can die, but it is not so with our loved ones. Naarden is not indifferent to our fate. She sends her

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dear love, but as for munitions of war, she is as bare as we; and though she has determined to defy Don Frederick, she has neither powder nor soldiers. The day I reached them they had just sent to Sonoy for help; but the garrison told me they believed Sonoy is herself naked of resources. I have come back, knowing the swift measures of the Spaniards. There was nothing to gain in delay, and I feared I might not be in time to die within your walls."

A groan burst from the throng. Bilder seized Belle-Isle's arm and hurried him away, saying, "No need to stay here. I know this council will vote for peace, as certainly as if each line in the palm of my hand had the meaning of the future written under it, like a good map. To-morrow the devils of Castile will pour in upon us."

"Not to-morrow!" said Belle-Isle sharply, "These huge walls are not so easily overthrown."

"True, Belle-Isle, but men's hearts are not so stout as the walls they build. I was scarce able to keep the gates closed until thy return. Don Frederick promises mercy. *Mercy!*" cried Bilder in the voice of a wild beast. "And these fools believe him. But shall we not hold out to the last—thou and I, for Wilhelmina? I love her, she is my life. Thou, too Belle-Isle, art a good knight. We will fortify Hendrik's house and defy hell."

"Yes, yes!" cried Belle-Isle, his eyes burning, "let us instantly to work!"

"If Hans were here, Hans my echo!" exclaimed

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Bilder as they ran along the street. "I shall never succeed without Hans; it was I who spoke, but Hans who performed."

They came to Hendrik's house, and there stood Wilhelmina in the doorway. "Belle-Isle, Belle-Isle!" As he took her in his arms, he looked into her eyes; they were shining like stars. The old look had come back to Wilhelmina's face; he had not seen it since their wedding-day. Belle-Isle, Bilder, Hendrik, Wilhelmina and Vrouw van Boendale set to work to fortify the house. Curtains were hung over the windows that the heavy boards within might not be detected. Cobblestones were torn up from the street and carried within to be set against the two outer doors. The workers met others engaged in the same work. The council had broken up after an angry debate; the city gates were to be thrown open the next day, at noon.

When morning came the Janssens were in a state of siege. Every window was secured, and a triple stone wall stood against each outer door. Heavy timbers supported weak places. Loopholes had been made looking upon the street. On one side a deep canal formed a natural defence. Morning found the women pale and exhausted, for the fire of excitement had given way to the chill of bodily infirmity. The men, also, were haggard, especially Belle-Isle, who for two days and nights, had not slept.

"Now to bed," said Hendrik, "we shall need all our strength before this day is over." He turned to his daughter and embraced her. "My dear, if ever I have

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spoken sternly to thee, it was because thou hadst no mother to teach thee a maiden's ways."

"Thou hast been too gentle with me," cried Wilhelmina. "But not too gentle, either. When one comes to die, he finds he has never erred on the side of kindness."

"Thou shalt not die while I live," said Bilder fiercely, "and I know thy husband, though no Catholic, will say Amen to that. He has no saint in his meagre Protestant repository, so he must trust all the more to his sword. But let us to the magic casket of sleep, from which one draws new riches every day, though one never puts any wealth therein the night before."

While all slept, the cold November morning wore on toward its fatal noon. About eleven, Belle-Isle started up and slipping softly from Wilhelmina's side, crept downstairs. He lit the fire on the great hearth and as the flames danced merrily, he stood and watched them, with a listening ear. Presently Wilhelmina stood by his side. It was for her feet his ear had listened. They embraced silently, then stood watching the fire, while the barricaded windows made the apartment gloomy and strange.

"Now I must prepare some food," said Wilhelmina; but Belle-Isle held her to his side. "Not yet," he whispered. She looked up into his eyes, and then they smiled at one another. "Belle-Isle!" she said softly. Their eyes filled with tears. Then the others came.

It was about noon when the tramp of many feet was heard. Looking from the loopholes they saw an impos-



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ing procession marching to open the city gates. First went the burgomaster, a senator, and four of the wealthiest burghers, bearing the keys of Zutphen. Behind them came a long line of priests in sacerdotal robes, then burghers in rich attire, but all afoot and unarmed.

An hour passed by, and outside reigned a deathlike silence. Another hour, and the ominous hush was unbroken. Three o'clock. Then they heard the running of light feet. Looking through the loopholes, they saw little children running and clapping their hands. "They are coming! They are coming!" cried the little ones in shrill excitement, "the Spaniards are at the gates!"

## *Chapter Nine*

### *THE MASSACRE*

**I**T was not long before the Zutphen procession was seen returning. As it advanced, it formed in two lines to allow the Spaniards to pass between them. At the head of the invaders rode Don Frederick and Julian Romero. They swept past Hendrik's house and halted far up the street. Behind them came the knights of St. James of Compostella in helmets of gold. Then was seen a strange company — a company whose armor was not gilded, whose weapons were ungemmed. But in spite of plain attire there was that in the ferocious faces that struck the Netherlanders with terror. Bilder whispered hoarsely, "The Fiends de Oviedo! Dost remember, Belle-Isle?"

"Wilhelmina," said Belle-Isle, plucking her sleeve, "seest thou the captain of those demons?"

"I have seen him before," murmured Wilhelmina. "Oh! it was when I first met thee, Belle-Isle. He was an esquire. What a beautiful face!"

It was upon his lips to tell her that this was Rosamunda, but something stayed the words — perhaps his promise of long ago. He noted lines of care and pain

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already shadowed faintly upon the little soldier's brow, ere time should come and cut them deep. Her company halted. The middle of the road was filled with soldiers, while between them and the houses stood the unarmed citizens. In the sudden stillness the heavy tread of another division of the army could be heard, entering another part of the city. The burgomaster stood respectfully before Don Frederick, as the Spaniard proudly sat his Barbary horse. It was as if the army had been turned to stone. The senators raised the cry, "Long live the King!" It was taken up by the citizens, and the shout rose to heaven,—a shout for Philip the Second. Still the Spaniards neither moved nor spoke. The inhabitants looked at each other covertly, while the color faded from their cheeks. Then some one cried, "Long live the Duke of Alva!" It was echoed so faintly that Don Frederick smiled.

Suddenly the tense silence was broken by the sharp blast of a trumpet. Instantly the army started into life. Every hand sought its sword, while from every Spanish throat burst one word, repeated in an inhuman fury, "*Kill! kill! kill!*" The street before Hendrik's house presented a scene of terrible confusion. The cavalry rode upon the defenceless inhabitants and trampled them under their horses' hoofs. In the first moments of their amazement the Netherlands suffered themselves to be overborne and butchered without resistance; when the perfidy of the enemy was understood, retreat was cut off. Some, indeed, fled into the houses, the doors and windows of which were then secured, and the soldiers did

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not seek to stay them, since there were more huddled together in corners and byways than they could despatch in a hurry.

The cavalry now dashed forward while the infantry formed in a hollow square as wide as the street. Again silence reigned. Here and there a body writhed convulsively within the hollow square where all the slain had been heaped. The motionless soldiers held rapiers wet from the carnage; their arms and even their faces were crimsoned from the lifeblood of their victims. "This," muttered Bilder, hoarsely, "is Spanish mercy!"

Wilhelmina and Vrouw van Boendale crouched beside the hearth, unable to endure the scene of horror. "Thank God! Hans is safe in Leyden!" whispered Wilhelmina.

"And Kenau," said the other. "But why do the soldiers wait outside? Pray for us, Hendrik!"

"Nay," said Bilder, "let us rather get our weapons ready. Hark!" From afar came shrieks for mercy and screams of agony. They drew nearer, resolving themselves into cries of men, women, and children. That side of the square next the approaching clamor, opened. Then Bilder and Belle-Isle, from the loopholes, saw a mob of fleeing wretches, while behind them thundered the Spanish horses. Wild jeers rose from the cavalry as it spurred in pursuit, riding down those in the rear. Terror gave the fugitives the fleetness of the wind. On they came, never ceasing to shriek for mercy, — on, to escape those ironclad horsemen, — on, until they rushed blindly into the hollow square. The cavalry halted, and

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wheeled about to drive fresh victims into the trap. The square closed. The fugitives found themselves between four walls of lust and hate. To find a standing place they were forced upon the corpses of their friends and kindred.

Then a second massacre began. The women stretched out their arms in supplication to the soldiers; their answer was a laugh. Infants were struck from the arms of their mothers. The men crossed their wrists in token of surrender. The sides of the square approached each other, slaying as they advanced toward the centre, climbing upon palpitating forms. Those who made the sign of the cross were disembowelled as ruthlessly as the staunchest reformer. The women were subjected to hideous indignities. It was the order to destroy every inhabitant of Zutphen, and the soldiers grew weary before their hearts ceased to leap for more atrocities. They were not content to torture the men and degrade the women before killing them; their fury was unassuaged even by tossing babes from one side of the street to the other, catching them upon their spears; but in their frenzy they tore hearts from living bodies, and opened veins that they might literally drink the blood of those they hated. When at last the soldiers were worn out with murder, the massacre was hastened. Six hundred men and women were stripped naked, tied back to back and thrown into the Yssel with stones at their necks.

In the meantime those who had sought refuge in their homes had listened to their own fate in the screams of their neighbors. Their time had now come. The doors

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and windows were forced, and the sight of those who had dared seek to preserve their lives inspired the Spaniards to fresh deeds of atrocity and licentiousness. They were to be seen staggering half-drunk through the streets, bearing booty, — furniture of all kinds, and gold plate, — or leading beautiful maidens and strong men to be sold as slaves. The churches were profaned, as if the army were the enemy of Rome. Captains issued from the portals, clad in consecrated vestments; others carried as plunder the golden chalices of the sacrament.

Night came, and Hendrik's house still sheltered its little garrison. The few fortified dwellings had been left for the last. The moon rose bright in the cold sky and looked down upon the stricken city from which still ascended such shrieks of agony that distant towns trembled, and for days thereafter dared not send to inquire the fate of Zutphen. The few who had contrived to scale the walls were pursued by horsemen, who first stripped them naked, then turned them loose to wander over the frozen ground, or hanged them to trees by their feet.

At last a band of resolute soldiers approached Hendrik Janssen's home as if they had marked the house for special vengeance. Belle-Isle and Bilder recognized the company by means of the light from blazing buildings that flooded the street. They were the Fiends de Oviedo, and at their head stood the little soldier.

## *Chapter Ten*

### *THE KEEPING OF THE VOW*

**T**HE Spaniards did not demand the surrender of the house, for they realized that promises of leniency could avail nothing. There came a terrific blow upon the door, then a second and a third. The huge oaken portal, supported by the triple stone wall, stood firm. A shout of impatient fury came from without, then the door was abandoned and the besiegers rushed to one of the windows. They carried a heavy beam, supported by four men. The end threatening the window was bound with iron.

“Now!” came a sharp voice, clear as a bell. It was the little soldier. The four men started forward upon a run, slanting up the beam. Its iron end smote the window and there was a crash of glass. The boards nailed across the opening held firm. “Again!” cried their leader.

Bilder turned to Belle-Isle. “Stand ready!” he cried, then tore a torch from the sconce and trampled out its light. The room was left in complete darkness. The defenders retreated to the hearth, and faced the threatened window, their bows drawn taut, steel-tipped arrows fitted to the notch. There was the rush of feet again,



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and the beam thundered against the barricade. The wood was splintered, and the loosening iron fastenings groaned. The Spaniards shouted exultantly. "Once more!" cried the little soldier.

Again the rush of feet, the deafening blow,—and the window was cleared. The red light from the street glowed in the opening. "*Kill! kill!*" cried the soldiers, rushing forward, drunk with horrors but still unsurfeited. A head appeared in the opening, then another. There was the hiss of death and two arrows found their mark. The dead Spaniards fell back into the street. Instantly Wilhelmina supplied Bilder and Belle-Isle with fresh arrows.

Bilder shouted in stentorian tones, "Ay, kill! kill!" Then, turning to Hendrik, "Thy bow is ready, Father Janssen. Ho, ho, it is a great night in Zutphen! It was well done, Belle-Isle!"

"I have never yet killed a man," said Hendrik slowly.

"The Blessed Virgin has spared thee to a ripe age that thou mightst have that dignity. The devils come again. Stand firm!"

"Charge!" came the voice of Rosamunda. There was a rush to the window. A form appeared in the red glare, then leaped into the room, followed by another, while two more clung to the sill, supported from below. "The Fiends de Oviedo!" shouted the two who had gained the room.

"The Holland Wolves!" cried Bilder. The intruders had scarcely drawn their swords, when an arrow smote the breast of each. They fell in convulsions.

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"Here, Bilder," said Hendrik, handing his bow, "thou canst pick off one upon the window-sill."

"So I will. The Holland Wolves! Kill! kill!"

A silence fell upon the besiegers; the attack was stayed. In the street they surrounded their leader, talking in low voices.

"What say they?" demanded Bilder impatiently.

"I heard some one say, 'They are the Holland Wolves,'" answered Belle-Isle. "Look, — they are forming some plan."

"That was a great thought, my crying 'The Holland Wolves!' said Bilder, grinning. "They will think Hans Poot is here, and his name will be handed down in glory along with mine! That was a stratagem worthy of Hans himself. Poor Hans, — and his plans never did any good but to feed his own vanity! But I wonder why they pause?"

"They have lost six men," said Belle-Isle, "and they think windows come high at that price." He was interrupted by a loud cry from the street. "They run!" he exclaimed in amazement. "Look Bilder, — as if a vandra pursued them!"

"It is the answer of God!" cried Hendrik, who had been upon his knees with the women.

"They will return," growled Bilder. "When the devil runs away it is to get him a sharper sword. We shall never pine for want of company in this world. Poor Wilhelmina! Art very much afraid?"

"No, Bilder. Belle-Isle has promised I shall never fall alive into their power." Bilder went to her and

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took her hand. He looked into her face and a mist came into his eyes. Suddenly he led her to Belle-Isle and put her hand in that of her husband. Then he turned his back upon the group.

As they waited in breathless suspense, screams never ceased to be heard from all parts of the city. At last the roar of approaching voices was heard, broken by the jarring of heavy wheels. "They return," muttered Bilder, staring through the shattered window with his red eyes. "Ho! ho! a cannon, by St. Bavon! Here is short work, friends!" He leaned from the window and shouted, "The Holland Wolves! — the two of them! The Holland Wolves and Belle-Isle! Kill! kill! Long live the Beggars!"

"The Fiends de Oviedo!" came the answer, and a bullet struck the casement above his head. The cannon was wheeled before the front door and a soldier sprang forward with a torch. Bilder drew his bow and its arrow pierced the iron links that guarded the brawny arm. The torch fell to the ground while the soldier writhed in agony. Some one sprang forward, snatching up the spluttering torch. It was Rosamunda, her white face as beautiful and terrible as that of a destroying angel, painted by a master-hand in a dream of genius.

"Shoot, Belle-Isle!" cried Bilder, "in God's name! Oh if my bow were ready!" Belle-Isle drew his weapon, but a mist passed over his eyes. His arrow sped amiss. Bilder groaned. "Stand to the wall!" he shouted. At that moment Rosamunda applied the torch to the cannon.

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There was the stillness of death, then a terrific explosion. The oak door was demolished, while the stone wall was scattered over the floor. With a savage shout of triumph the Spaniards poured over the débris into the room. Belle-Isle, seizing Wilhelmina, rushed with her to the farthest corner, Bilder leaping after them, his bow discarded and his huge sword flashing. Vrouw van Boendale sought to follow, but the sudden terror and the sight of the ferocious faces so near at hand overcame her. She fainted. Hendrik sought to lift her up, but a musket sent its ball through his head. It was the only one fired, for the soldiers who stood upon the ruined wall were pushed forward by their comrades from behind, before they could aim their firearms.

"A woman," said a soldier, pausing to stare at the insensible form beside the dead Hollander.

"An old one," said he who had slain Hendrik. With the butt of his weapon he killed Vrouw van Boendale in her swoon; it was an act of mercy. The intruding tide swept over the bodies toward the distant corner.

Bilder cried in choking fury, "Long live the Beggars! Long live the Holland Wolves!" Those who were pressed forward sought to draw back at sight of his terrible face, as he stood before Wilhelmina and Belle-Isle. There was a struggle to escape the giant sword whose fame had spread throughout the land, but the way was choked up by clamoring men. Some dropped their firearms and felt for their daggers. Others caught their muskets by the muzzle and swung them at Bilder's

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head. The giant stood before the Frenchman, and the latter before Wilhelmina.

Bilder reached out his long arm and with lightning flashes of his sword, pierced the breast of a soldier upon his right, and another upon his left. They fell in a heap and those who were pushed forward stumbled over their corpses. Over them leaped a Spaniard and with the butt of his weapon dealt the Hollander a terrific blow upon the head. The Holland Wolf staggered back and Belle-Isle caught him in his arms.

A wild yell rang in the room: "The Fiends de Oviedo!"

Bilder with a great effort rallied his shattered powers. With a sudden swing of his blade he severed from his body the head of the man who had wounded him. For a moment the body stood upright in its armor while a great jet of blood spurted upward and rained down upon upturned faces. Bilder caught the head by its hair, and waved it above his face, now ghastly from his own wound. "The Holland Wolves!" he cried thickly, "Long live the Beggars!" With the dissevered head in one hand and his great sword in the other he rushed into the thick of the press. Belle-Isle saw him thrusting to right and left with crimsoned blade, while with the head he dealt blows as he advanced. But at every step a sword was thrust at him, and he had not gone far before he fell, pierced by many hands.

When the Frenchman found that Bilder had fallen never to rise again, he looked hurriedly at Wilhelmina who stood behind him. The advance was suddenly

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checked, and in the silence Belle-Isle whispered, "Close thy dear eyes, Wilhelmina!"

She smiled and closed her eyes. "Be sure it is my heart," she said.

A clear musical voice rang near at hand: "Take them both alive!" Belle-Isle turned about. A slight form stood between him and the red eyes and the inflated nostrils of the enemy. Belle-Isle looked into Rosamunda's face, but Rosamunda looked at Wilhelmina.

"De Oviedo!" cried Belle-Isle wildly.

Rosamunda looked into his eyes. He thought he read a gentle message. He stepped to her impulsively and delivered his sword. "We throw ourselves upon thy mercy," he said with a bow. Wilhelmina cried out in terror.

"Bind them!" cried the little soldier sharply. "Bring them after me." She walked from the house while a way was made for her.

"Fear not," said Belle-Isle to his wife, "I know that leader; we are saved." Men pinioned their arms roughly to their sides, then tied them together by the waist.

"Forward!" cried one, striking the Frenchman with the flat of his sword, "but, by the Virgin! it were better for thee to die here. De Oviedo reserves thee for some terrible torture."

"Ay," said another, "for this is the first woman he ever fancied!"

"True, Christoval," rejoined the first, as they pushed

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through the crowd which was breaking up in search of plunder, "but he is right. Look at her eyes and hair! She is not so bad for a Hollander."

Wilhelmina crept close to her husband.

"Stand aside!" cried another, pushing Belle-Isle back. "Look at her, comrades. De Oviedo is human, after all, thank God!" They gained the street and followed Rosamunda who advanced among blazing houses without looking over her shoulder. At the first turning they met a band of drunken soldiers.

"Ho! a dainty morsel!" cried one of the revellers. "Set a price on her, comrades, a price!"

"She is De Oviedo's bride," said Cristoval with a grin. "Forward!"

"But you have also a live heretic," exclaimed another of the merry party. "Whose bride is he? Give him up, for my sword is thirsty."

"Go hunt thine own heretics!" retorted Cristoval. "Are they scarce? Our swords also want drink. Stay not the Fiends de Oviedo!" The prisoners were hurried on. When they reached the High Street, they came upon a company of soldiers making assaults upon a stone house. Rosamunda halted and questioned their leader.

"They are stubborn devils," said the leader, "and their nest is strong. If we ever get at them, we will hang every one, man and woman, head to earth, ay, men?"

Rosamunda addressed her command. "Fiends, stay and aid the true cause. Cristoval, thou and three others



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will be sufficient to come with me." Some obeyed reluctantly, sorry not to witness the fate of the prisoners; but no one thought of disobeying the little soldier. The captives were led through the city, seeing upon every hand broken furniture, burning houses, ghastly corpses, while even in the graveyards and before the church doors deeds were being committed which degraded the masters of Zutphen beneath the barbarians who sacked Rome. Rosamunda led on over the Yssel bridge beyond the western gate, paying no heed to naked wretches who fled past, pursued by laughing horsemen. The air was very cold, and the little pools left from yesterday's rain were frozen to the bottom. As they passed the trees which stood dark and silent now that the moon had set, one caught glimpses of white objects swaying under the branches; from these issued wails of agony that would have moved to mercy any heart not hardened by zeal for a true religion. Thus they would hang by the feet those naked patriots of the Netherlands, two days, — three, — in some cases even four, ere death called them into the presence of Him in whose name they had been tortured.

At last the city was lost from sight, but the red glare of its conflagration crimsoned the sky, while the chorus of its misery came in shrieks, broken by the dull reports of musketry.

"Halt!" said the leader suddenly. Nothing was to be seen but the level darkness, save, not very far away, a huge windmill which spread its arms as if groping its way in the gloom. Rosamunda laid her hand

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upon the rope which bound the prisoners together. "Come with me," she said; then to the men, — "Wait here."

"But, master —" said Cristoval.

"Peace!" said Rosamunda; "I have my sword." Cristoval held up his torch that it might lighten his captain's path. The three advanced about a hundred yards toward the windmill, then paused.

"Comrades," cried Cristoval gleefully, "we shall soon see a thing it will do to tell!" His companions laughed harshly and strained their eyes.

Rosamunda, looking back, saw the four soldiers motionless in the red halo of their torch. She addressed Belle-Isle: "This is thy wife?"

"Oh, yes!" said the Frenchman eagerly.

"Yes," said Rosamunda; "I saw it in her eyes."

"God will bless thee, little soldier," whispered Belle-Isle hurriedly.

Rosamunda severed with one blow of her sword the rope that held them together. "Has she strength to run?"

"Yes; with Belle-Isle," exclaimed Wilhelmina. The little soldier struck the bonds from their arms.

"Escape, if you can!" she said. "I will keep them from the pursuit as long as possible. Here is my sword. We shall never meet again, Belle-Isle, never again. But after this, when thou thinkest of me, thou wilt not be sorry that we ever met. I am glad to do this little for thy sake. And I am glad to think that pleasant thoughts will keep my image in thy heart. Oh, Belle-

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Isle, God give thee the happiness he has denied me!  
Now run — run — run ! ”

Belle-Isle, thrilled with hope and happiness, caught his wife's arm and rushed with her toward the windmill, too jealous of his moments to give Rosamunda a farewell. The soldiers hearing the running feet, hurried up to Rosamunda.

“ In God's name ! ” cried Cristoval wildly, “ what has happened ? ”

“ Stand ! ” cried Rosamunda fiercely. They halted at the word.

“ De Oviedo,” said Cristoval brokenly, as he flashed the torchlight upon her face, “ Thou hast set them free ! Here are their severed bonds.” She met his eyes unmoved. “ Hast thou forgotten thy vow ? ” he demanded, and a sob broke his voice.

“ It shall be executed,” she answered quietly.

Cristoval fell upon his knees. “ Oh, my captain, in God's name, suffer us to pursue and capture those wretches ! ”

“ It is my will that they escape,” she answered.

“ But our vow ! our vow ! ” cried the others, kneeling about her feet. “ De Oviedo ! our vow ! ”

“ We care nothing for those heretics,” faltered Cristoval, “ but we love thee, De Oviedo. Comrades, for once shall we not disobey his orders ? Come ! For if they escape — ”

“ Stay ! ” exclaimed the little soldier sternly. “ This is my will. It matters not to a soldier how he falls.”

“ But listen ! ” Cristoval suddenly exclaimed. “ The

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beat of horses! God be praised! they have run into an ambuscade! Spaniards were hidden in yonder windmill."

"True!" exclaimed the other excitedly. "How they gallop from the tower! De Oviedo! we need not slay thee, after all, since thy mercy was unavailing."

"They cry out in death agonies!" said one of the kneeling forms. "Cries of heretics are sweet music to the ears of the faithful."

From the windmill came an exultant shout: "Long live the Beggars! Long live the Holland Wolves!"

"Merciful God!" wailed Cristoval, "they have come to life, those Holland Wolves!" There was a death-like silence, then the little soldier spoke without a tremor:

"When I am dead, carry me to the Yssel and sink me with a stone about my neck, that no one may look upon my body and say 'This was De Oviedo.' Cristoval, thou wast the friend of Gonzalvo de Oviedo; swear by the Crucifix this last request will be obeyed."

"I swear it, by the Crucifix," he faltered.

"I am ready," said Rosamunda; "I will hold the torch that your aim may be true. Let each fire at my heart, that no one may know who killed me. Remember, as you take aim, that I showed mercy to Belle-Isle, a heretic; and that I love him with all the passion of my soul; and that I am glad to die for him, and glory in the privilege; that I even spared his wife, and am willing for him to be happy in her love." She held the flaming torch from her body in a steady hand. They took up

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a position only a few paces from her, their four muskets levelled at her breast.

“*Fire!*” cried Rosamunda.

There was no report. From Zutphen came ceaseless shrieks of agony and fear, while from the direction of the windmill was borne to their ears the faint echo of galloping hoofs.

“I am still your captain!” cried the little soldier sternly. “While I live, you have sworn to obey my orders. *Fire!*”

A sheet of red flame burst upon the gloom of the night. Rosamunda fell. Cristoval dropped his musket and ran to where she lay. He knelt and put his arm about the slight form. The others hurried up, and one, lifting the torch, flashed its light over her white face. “Dead,” said the torch-bearer. “Look, — there is only one wound. God knows my hand never trembled as it did when I took aim at De Oviedo. How beautiful he is!”

“He died without a groan,” said another.

“He was not one to groan over his own fall,” said Cristoval. “But I thought as I reached him that his lips whispered a strange name.”

“What name, Cristoval?”

“It sounded like ‘Sister Mala.’” Cristoval kissed the cold cheek. “I was his father’s friend. Let us execute his last wish. But first, let us swear upon this dead body that so long as we live, pity for the Netherlanders shall never enter our hearts!” They took the oath, holding their hands over Rosamunda’s bosom, seal-

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ing their vow with her life-blood. Then silently they bore her toward the doomed city, and its wild light shone upon her burial, and the dark waters of the Yssel closed about her, hiding forever her secret from the world.

## *Chapter Eleven*

### *JAN IS READY*

**I**T was night when Jan Janssen and Hans Poot came in sight of Zutphen, on the day of the massacre. The gaping ruins, reddened by internal fires, caused them to check their horses behind the stone tower of a windmill. As they stared at the devoted city, realizing that somewhere within its walls were their loved ones, perhaps enduring hellishly ingenious tortures, their emotions were maddening. Hours passed in impotent fury; then Hans exclaimed, "A torch advances!"

"I have done all I could," said Jan; "here are we with the led horses. If God wishes to use us, — here we are!"

"They cannot be Hollanders," Hans reflected, "else they would not dare carry a torch."

After a long silence Jan said, "They run this way; and they run like Hollanders."

"The torch stands still," observed Hans. "By St. Bavon, this looks like some stratagem!"

They rode forth from the windmill and the running ceased. "The Prince of Orange!" cried Jan, staring into the darkness.



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"And the Holland Wolves, God bless them!" cried Hans.

"Jan, Jan!" It was the voice of Wilhelmina.

"My sister!" shouted Jan. "Now God knew I was here! Quick upon this horse! Father?"

"Nay," said the Frenchman, "Belle-Isle."

"It is always Belle-Isle!" exclaimed Jan. "Dear heart, where is our father and Vrouw van Boendale?"

All was told in a word as the horses were mounted. "If I had been there!" groaned Hans Poot.

"Bilder fought for you both," said Belle-Isle as he rode beside the Holland Wolf. "His deeds were terrible, and each moment he cried out 'The Holland Wolves!' He died, dealing many blows, pierced by many swords."

After a long silence Hans drew beside the Frenchman: "Whenever I go to battle,—and that shall be until Holland is free,—I shall always cry out 'The Holland Wolves!' That shall be for me fighting in the thick of battle, and for Bilder, fighting for me in Paradise. I shall bestow no candles for his soul,—he is not the sort that is plucked out of purgatory by the burning of candles. No, no! I shall let him out with my sword."

They reached Leyden in safety and were received by Gerbrand van der Loren. In those days, the patriots made penniless by a stroke of fortune found homes among the more prosperous. Love of country and fidelity to a new religion bound the people together; but Belle-Isle had restored Anna to her parents years

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before, so he had an especial claim upon Gerbrand's heart. At the end of several weeks their new relations had become adjusted. Hans said to Jan, "Is it not time for thee to ask Kenau?"

Jan in a burst of confidence, placed his hand upon the other's shoulder and opened his mouth.

"By St. Bavon!" continued Hans Poot, "I cannot live longer in the house with Anna, never giving her a peep into my heart!"

"I am going to Amsterdam," said Jan. "A merchant there offers me work."

"But Kenau?" returned Hans, impatiently.

"But Belle-Isle!" replied the other, shaking his head.

So Jan went to Amsterdam, while Hans became one of the Wild Beggars of the Sea. About three months after the ravage of Zutphen, Jan rode upon his mule to Leyden in response to a letter from his sister. Avoiding all who might recognize him, he slipped to Gerbrand's home, passed through the garden-hedge, and approached the living-room, where a rosy light from a generous hearth-fire told of good cheer. Jan grasped the sill with fingers stiffening from the February cold. Suddenly his great form shook with excitement. He removed one hand and smote his knee with irrepressible emotion.

Beside the hearth, with the light full upon her, sat Wilhelmina, her face irradiated by a great happiness. It was a look Jan had never seen upon her face,—a look which touched him deeper than the freshness of

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maidenhood forever vanished. On the other side of the hearth stood Belle-Isle, or rather danced Belle-Isle, waving his arms and singing a French song. But it was neither Wilhelmina nor Belle-Isle who caused Jan's excitement. Upon Wilhelmina's knee sat a character who now appears for the first time in this history — a very red-faced and formless infant.

Jan burst into the house, shouting, "Where is Kenau?"

"Jan, Jan!" cried Wilhelmina starting up, while Belle-Isle with a blush balanced himself upon one leg. "My own darling brother! Here is the secret I mentioned in my letter. Behold, brother! this is little Jan Belle-Isle. Is he not the image of his father?"

"Where is Kenau?" shouted Jan, waving away the infant as it was extended toward him.

"Did some one call me?" asked a shy voice from the inner doorway. It was the voice of her for whom his heart called so long.

"I foresee a wedding," exclaimed Belle-Isle, smiling into his wife's eyes with that golden radiance upon his face which comes only when two hearts shine together.

"Two, two!" cried Jan. "Will Hans let me outdo him in strategy?"

Thus in the darkest hours of the country's history, though liberty is far removed upon the horizon of a clouded future — though Leyden is yet to astonish the world by its heroic endurance, and is to save itself by

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turning the waters of the sea against its besiegers; though the day of the "Spanish Fury" is yet to be written in blood, — we take leave of those lives which have intertwined their threads in this story. Without fear we bid them farewell, for love's light reveals happiness in the darkest night.

THE END





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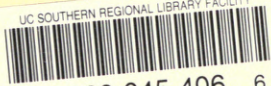






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